Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY • NUMBER FIVE • NOVEMBER 1985

How Has the United States Met Its Major Challenges Since 1945?

A Symposium

Lionel Abel · William Barrett · Peter L. Berger · Walter Berns · Midge Decter
Joseph Epstein · Suzanne Garment · Nathan Glazer · Owen Harries · Sidney Hook
Jeane J. Kirkpatrick · Joseph Kraft · Irving Kristol · Walter Laqueur · Michael Ledeen
Daniel Patrick Moynihan · Richard John Neuhaus · Robert Nisbet
Michael Novak · William Phillips · Richard Pipes · Eugene V. Rostow
Bayard Rustin · Edward Shils · John R. Silber · Robert W. Tucker
Ernest van den Haag · James Q. Wilson · Albert Wohlstetter

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Commentary

VOLUME 80 NUMBER FIVE *NOVEMBER 1985*

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Letters from Readers

Political Pilgrims

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his excellent article, "The Newest Political Pilgrims" [August], Paul Hollander chronicles the long tradition of pilgrimages by American liberals to Marxist states, from the Soviet Union in the 1920's to Nicaragua in the 1980's. In the wake of Mr. Hollander's article, I think one crucial problem remains unresolved. We need to know more about the origins of this phenomenon. What prompts "educated people, beneficiaries of considerable political freedom and material well-being," as Mr. Hollander so aptly describes them, to behave in this fashion?

It is a difficult question. However, there are scholarly precedents in the study of earlier political phenomena in American history which might be helpful. I think the best such work was done by Richard Hofstadter. Hofstadter wrote extensively about "status revolutions" and the "status symbolism" of the agrarian unrest in the late 19th century, the Progressive movement in the early 20th century, and McCarthyism in the late 1940's and early 1950's. We now need to find out about the "status symbolism" of Mr. Hollander's pilgrims and those who sympathize with Marxist regimes in general.

The importance of Hofstadter's work lay in his ability to show what was behind the rhetoric and the stated intentions of the McCarthyites and others. What lies behind the rhetoric and the stated intentions of Mr. Hollander's pilgrims? In his account, the same themes keep reappearing, whether in reference to the Soviet Union in the 1920's and 1930's, China in the 1940's and 1950's, Cuba and North Vietnam in the 1960's, and Nicaragua today. The fundamental aim, of course, has always been an alleged desire to improve the lot of toiling and exploited workers and peasants. But surely after nearly seventy years, and countless millions of casualties in states ruled by Marxist regimes, it should no longer be possible to take this aim seriously. Mr. Hollander notes his pilgrims' "tenacity of belief" and "willful inability to learn from history," which suggests that there is something more in it for them than their alleged altruism.

This is a very complex problem, but, I think, a very important one. Thanks to Mr. Hollander's work, we know much about *what* they have done. We now need to know more about *why* they do it. . . .

JAMES E. SALYERS
Ashmore, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Your August issue was lent to me by a devoted subscriber to COMMENTARY, a long-time friend who had no difficulty identifying me as one of Paul Hollander's "newest political pilgrims."

Mr. Hollander's skill in casting some positive aspects of the Nicaraguan experience quite negatively is formidable. I should think, for example, that he would credit the Sandinistas instead of carping at them for an open-door policy that welcomes visitors by the thousands to ramble and scramble at will throughout the country. During several health-care-related visits, I met my counterpart "pilgrims" from Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cuba, Denmark, England, France, Germany (East and West), Holland, Israel, Italy, as well as from areas throughout the United States, and beyond, most of whom had sought and been sought out by Sandinista supporters and detractors alike.

The free-wheeling, uninhibited criticism that was expressed by taxi drivers, fellow bus passengers, factory owners, farmers, and anybody else who had deep or superficial complaints reminded me of our own country, or, more precisely, in its frequent boisterousness, of Israel and Italy. As in these countries, dissent does not mean disloyalty; the machinery for change exists and can be utilized, although by embroiling Nicaragua in armed hostilities, the United States forces the imposition of constraining security measures (like ours during World War II) and then faults Nicaragua for imposing them. (Thus, leaders of the two anti-Sandinista trade-union confederations, CUS and CTN, have stated unequivocally their opposition to United States intervention.)

I should think, also, that Mr. Hollander would consider positively the ability of some of us "veterans of the radical movement of the 1960's" (and of earlier decades) to be hopeful and supportive when we see "a generous people, a poor and

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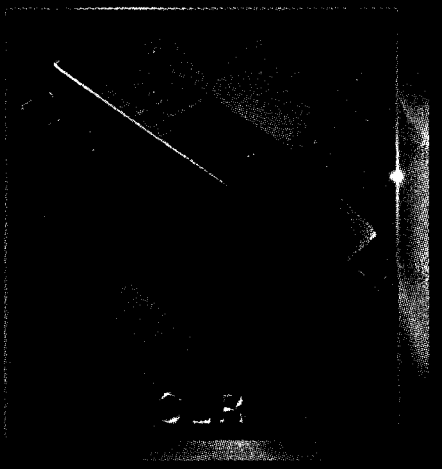

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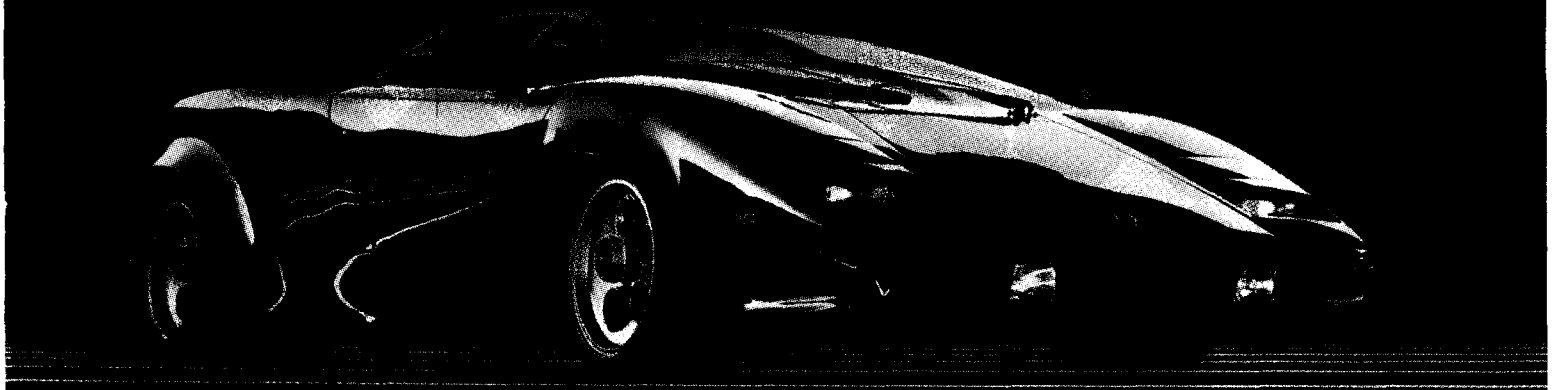

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often hungry people [trying] to make a truly democratic revolution" (Paul Hollander quoting Michael Harrington). Especially because we have, as he observes, sustained the disappointments of failed or aborted (as in Chile) social/political movements, we are heartened that Nicaraguans of varied political persuasions and social strata are committed to the concept of liberty and justice for all. We wish our government were mindful enough of the distinctive revolutionary origins of the United States to help the process in Nicaragua instead of hindering it.

And again, might not Mr. Hollander be respectful rather than disparaging of religious communities who support the Sandinista government because they perceive in its goals and its efforts to implement those goals the promise of constructive change? Substantial, even dramatic, improvements in literacy and health care, and the conduct of an election almost universally (600 observers from all over the world) judged to be free and fair, are significant achievements for a young nation under stress from staggering debts it did not incur and military incursions it does not deserve.

The argument seems clouded by the cascade of ideological juxtapositions (the Marxist-Leninist-Nicaragua and USSR-China-Vietnam-and-now-Nicaragua formulations, for example) and the arbitrariness with which Mr. Hollander picks his experts. . . .

But it is, finally, a lamentable lapse that renders Mr. Hollander's article so basically unuseful, and that is his failure to address even fleetingly the issue of United States policy vis-à-vis Nicaragua. Whatever the merits and limitations of the Nicaraguan government, it is an independent neighbor nation whose sovereignty we threaten by methods—terrorism, outlawry, broken treaty obligations—that we despise when they are practiced by others. We must surely wince at this hypocrisy. But if that does not motivate the nay-sayers to reconsider the causes and effects of their animus, perhaps they can apply a pragmatic test, and question whether the present conduct of the United States will inevitably be counterproductive and will fail by any measure.

EVELYN A. MAUSS
Neponsit, New York

PAUL HOLLANDER writes:

I appreciate the comments of James E. Salyers and shall attempt to respond briefly to the question he raises: why do the political pilgrims and the attitudes they embody keep recurring?

I argued in my book *Political Pilgrims* a few years ago that the admiration for and misperception of Marxist-Leninist dictatorships have invariably been accompanied by a rejection of the society from which the admirers come. I also noted in my article that "the-enemies-of-my-enemies-are-my-friends" psychology applies to the antagonism between the Reagan administration and Nicaragua. So the question then becomes, what are the sources of this estrangement, which produces well-meaning people predisposed to admire political systems undeserving of such admiration?

Various historical episodes have been associated with such estrangement—for example, the depression of the early 1930's and, more recently, the Vietnam war—but they are not the only explanation. A deeper unhappiness with contemporary Western society and its spiritual deficiencies is also involved. After all, the societies admired are perceived not only as dispensing social justice but also as permeated with a sense of purpose and community. The most difficult question to answer is why some people but not others are prone to adopt such attitudes. These are problems I am still thinking about and working on.

Evelyn A. Mauss, who identifies herself as one of the new pilgrims, rebukes me, among other things, for picking my experts arbitrarily, which means that she does not like what they say. But I could have quoted other sources, equally untainted by any association with the Somoza regime. There is, for example, Werner Herzog, the liberal West German film-maker; after visiting the Miskito Indians fighting the government, he concluded: "With good intentions, the Sandinistas tried to bring 'scientific socialism' to the Miskitos. . . . The story instead is one of deportation and concentration camps . . ."—not exactly an unfamiliar sequence in our time.

Why have such people become critics of the Sandinista regime? And why have Nicaraguans who helped make the revolution joined the *contra* movement? This is not a question entertained by Miss Mauss and other sympathizers. I suppose she would argue, as spokesmen for the regime and its foreign supporters do, that some of these people are crazy egomaniacs (Edén Pastora), that others have been corrupted by American money, while some simply did not have the endurance and integrity to persevere in the revolutionary process.

But how many refugees would it take (according to recent press reports, 150,000 Nicaraguans have come to the U.S. since the revolution) for Miss Mauss and others similarly disposed to acknowledge that regimes which make people pack up and leave in droves—as Marxist-Leninist regimes have done with monotonous regularity—are deeply flawed?

It is true that the population of Nicaragua today is not as intimidated as people in most other Marxist-Leninist states and that the government has not yet liquidated every vestige of social pluralism. But this is more likely a result of the fear of American pressure or intervention than a reflection of the regime's commitment to the "bourgeois freedoms" it derides.

I wonder if Miss Mauss has ever encountered official statements aimed not at American visitors but at audiences whom the Sandinistas do not need to mislead. Such statements include speeches by *comandantes* Daniel Ortega and Bayardo Arce dismissing the importance of elections as a device for altering the distribution of power. And does she know that many Sandinista leaders have long-standing ties to the Soviet Union, Cuba, and other equally "progressive" regimes and movements, including the PLO?

Unlike Miss Mauss and Michael Harrington, I find it difficult to equate the yearnings of the Nicaraguan people for "a truly democratic revolution" with the policies of the ruling group. Leninist revolutionaries are not in the habit of undertaking "truly democratic" revolutions, although they are willing, in Nicaragua and elsewhere, temporarily to make common cause with people who do. There is a superabundance of historical examples of the manner in which Leninists discard their erstwhile allies and supporters once they have consolidated power, a process already well under way in Nicaragua.

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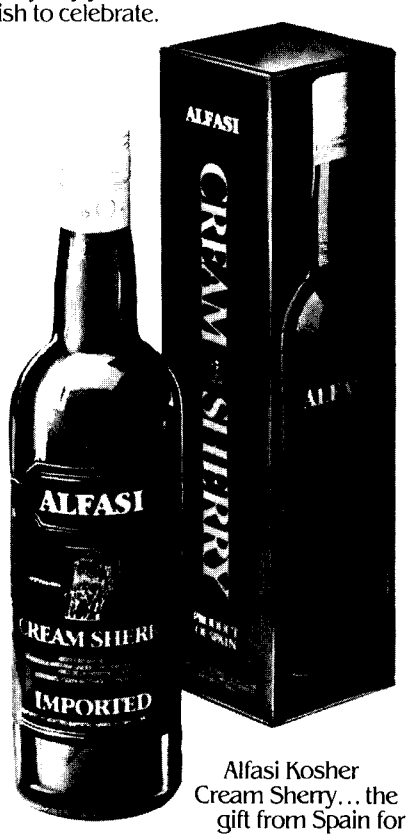

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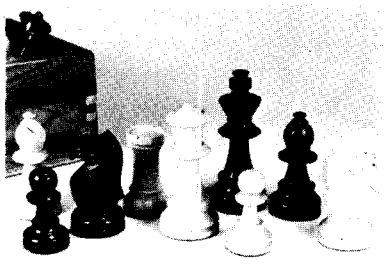

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abroad "almost universally" judged the Nicaraguan elections "free and fair" evokes further skepticism. For one thing, most of the observers were sympathetic to the regime; Freedom House in New York, for example, was not invited. It may also be noted that a coalition of the major opposition parties and labor unions declined to participate because of official harassment, a process described by Robert Leiken in the *New Republic*. A forthcoming book by Douglas Payne on these elections should be of interest to Miss Mauss, though I suspect that such reports will not convince her and she will continue to accept others more in accord with what she prefers to believe.

On my failure to address American policy and our support of the *contras*: in the first place, such support has been quite limited, as a recent article in the New York *Times* noted. The *contras* are vastly outgunned by the Soviet-Cuban-supplied Sandinista army, although they experience no shortage of recruits. Second, they deserve our support in their fight against an authoritarian regime (provided, of course, that they do not resort to terrorism). There is much evidence to indicate that the *contra* forces are composed predominantly of disillusioned Sandinistas, peasants, and Indians—in other words, people antagonized by the repressive nature of the regime and willing, for no material rewards, to put their lives on the line and fight with limited resources. I suspect as well that Sandinista support of the Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador does not elicit the same moral indignation from Miss Mauss.

The Sandinista achievements in health care and literacy, though not to be dismissed, may be put into a more sobering perspective by keeping in mind that as the rate of literacy expands, so does censorship; according to recent reports, Trotsky and Gramsci are among the authors the newly literate will not have access to. More balanced accounts of the socioeconomic accomplishments of the regime are also available in sources Miss Mauss will probably not consult. In any event, I never heard anyone of Miss Mauss's disposition defend the regimes of Taiwan or South Korea on account of the improvements they have made in public health. Evidently such gains carry moral weight only in left-wing police states.

Russian Writers

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In the July issue you published an article by Fernanda Eberstadt, "Out of the Drawer and Into the West," that dealt with the works of several contemporary Russian authors: Vassily Aksyonov, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Vladimir Kornilov, Yuri Trifonov, and also myself.

I am of course very grateful to Miss Eberstadt for her high and flattering appraisal of my literary work. I even consider her critical remarks about my novel *Ark for the Uncalled* quite fair and useful for me. I did indeed lack enough "breath" for this great endeavor. Miss Eberstadt's article is all the more important and dear to me in that it is the only serious analysis of my literary work that has been published in the American press in the over ten years of my forced emigration.

Nevertheless, while reading the article, a few objections occurred to me, especially in the section on my friend, the writer Vassily Aksyonov. I do not want to enter into a controversy with Miss Eberstadt about her critical analysis of this or that work by Aksyonov: a critic has the right to determine her own position regarding the subject of her study. My objections concern Miss Eberstadt's moral judgments of the writer's national mentality.

I have known Vassily Aksyonov for almost thirty years. In my view, he is one of the most honest and consistent representatives of our literary generation. Indeed, unlike such persons as myself, he was granted a great deal, since the authorities never lost hope until the very last of accommodating his exceptional talent to their ideological needs. He was widely published, his works were produced for the theater and movies, and he was able to travel abroad. Of course, when he was in trouble, he wrote—as did many others, by the way—his "on-duty" bureaucratic confession; but he was right in his reply to one of his critics that his "surrender" was not the most typical, since it contained none of the cynical impudence found in the numerous confessions of Yevgeny Yevtushenko and those like him.

But it is precisely because Aksyonov—I repeat, unlike many of us literary émigrés—was granted so much that he had so much to lose by entering into a final confrontation with the authorities. That is

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why his break with those in power was of greater consequence in terms of the price he paid, socially and in everyday life, than it was for most of us. Please understand me correctly: if tomorrow Yevtushenko, for whom I have nothing but contempt, did the same thing, I should be the first to hold out my hand.

Also, it is difficult for me not to agree with Aksyonov's appraisal of the situation in the U.S. as regards literature. We who were raised on the inspiring example of Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, J.D. Salinger, Saul Bellow, and many other admirable American masters, are witnessing an era in which literary speculators, various types of Mailers and Kosinskis, have turned the great prose of America into a marketplace for self-promotion and vulgar accommodation to readers' demands.

To this day I cannot regard my experience as a writer in the U.S. without bitterness and perplexity. Even though my first significant novel, *Seven Days of Creation* (Knopf, 1975), became a Book-of-the-Month-Club selection, it was honored only with a spiteful little remark in *Time* (written, by the way, by a great admirer of two "giants" of contemporary Russian poetry, Yevtushenko and Andrei Voznesensky), and a sweet-and-sour mention in a tiny little survey article in the Washington *Post*. As for my second novel, *Goodbye from Nowhere*, American reviewers decided not to notice it at all (this, you will surely agree, being unprecedented for a book by a Russian author in America when one thinks that the slightest sneeze of the pen by any dissident passing through raises whole discussions!). So that I voluntarily gave up the publication of my third novel, *Quarantine*, which had already been translated by Doubleday (translator: Michael Glenny), presuming that it would meet with an even worse fate.

I could guess with almost absolute certainty the reason this has befallen me in particular, but because I do not have first-hand evidence, I cannot allow myself to name the causes so as not to give opponents a pretext for further insinuations.

Then how, one might ask, does my position as a writer differ in the United States as compared with the USSR? It appears that I am undesirable both there and here, although, judging by the appraisals of professional critics in various countries and the literary awards given me in the West, I cannot be considered to be simply affected with graphomania.

Nevertheless, despite all my professional misfortunes and vexations, I prefer the Western world, because democracy, contrary to totalitarianism, gives me the precious right to defend myself. And I do just that, every day and every hour, not fearing that I will be sent to a camp or to a psychiatric hospital. More especially since, along with enemies, I also find I have friends like Fernanda Eberstadt and the editor of COMMENTARY, Norman Podhoretz.

In conclusion, I should like to mention two inaccuracies: even though my father was indeed an orthodox Trotskyite, I am nevertheless of Russian origin. And as for my friend, the writer and poet Vladimir Kornilov, he is still living in Moscow to this day.

VLADIMIR MAXIMOV
Brussels, Belgium

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Fernanda Eberstadt's article on contemporary Russian literature calls for comment.

Yuri Trifonov's novel *Time and Place*, which, Miss Eberstadt believes, "remains unpublished in the Soviet Union," has been published *twice*—in a literary journal *Druzhba narodov* (9-10, 1981) and in a collection of Trifonov's works, *Vechnye temy* (Moscow: *Sovetskii pisatel'*, 1984). Incidentally, since this book is not available in translation, one wonders how Miss Eberstadt learned about its contents. Relying on word of mouth has its dangers, as she convincingly demonstrates elsewhere in her article by describing Vladimir Kornilov as an émigré living in Paris. With COMMENTARY not yet widely available on Moscow newsstands, it is unlikely that Vladimir Kornilov will be in a position to correct Miss Eberstadt.

It would have been helpful had Miss Eberstadt explained the hitherto unsuspected link between Vas-

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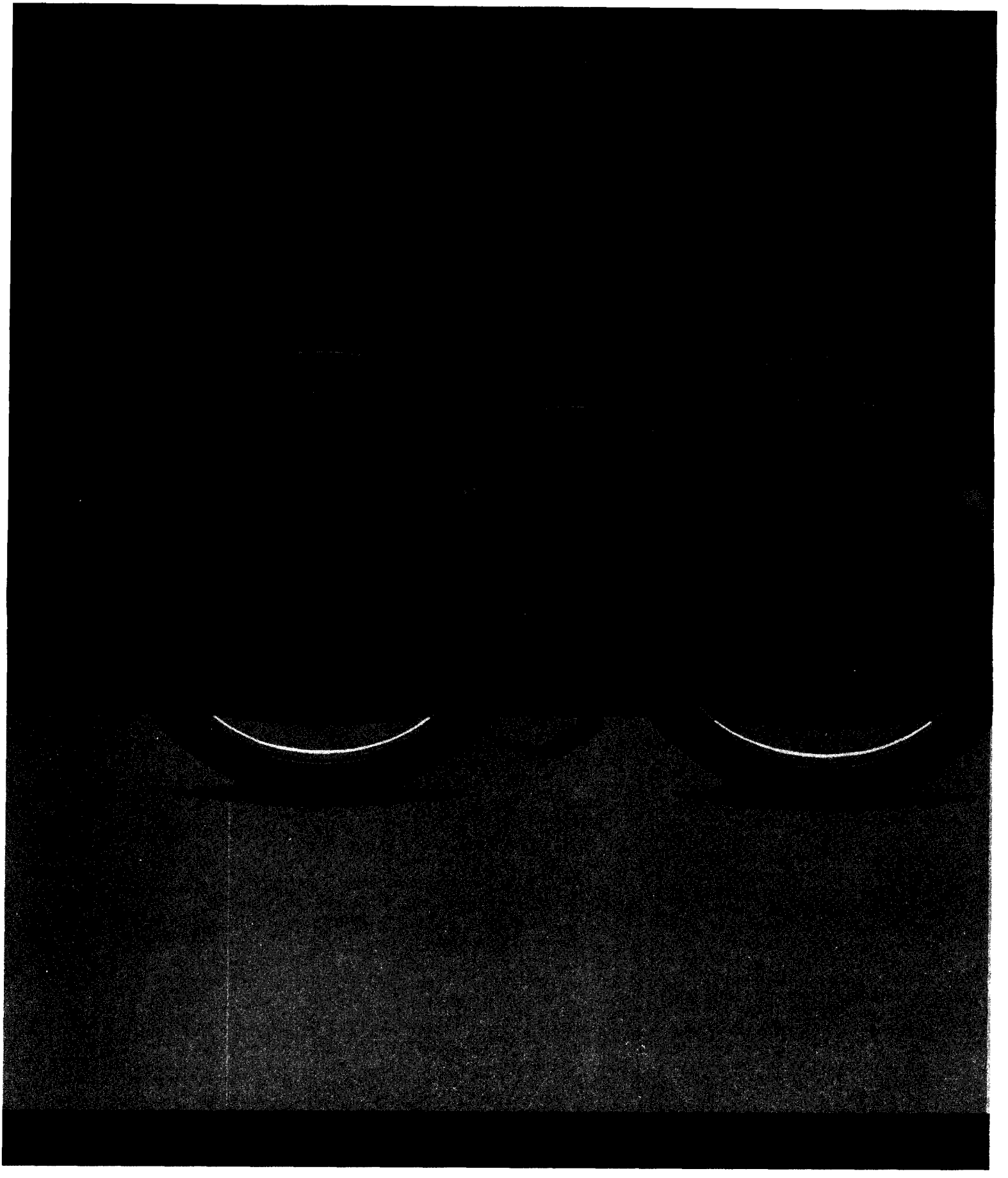

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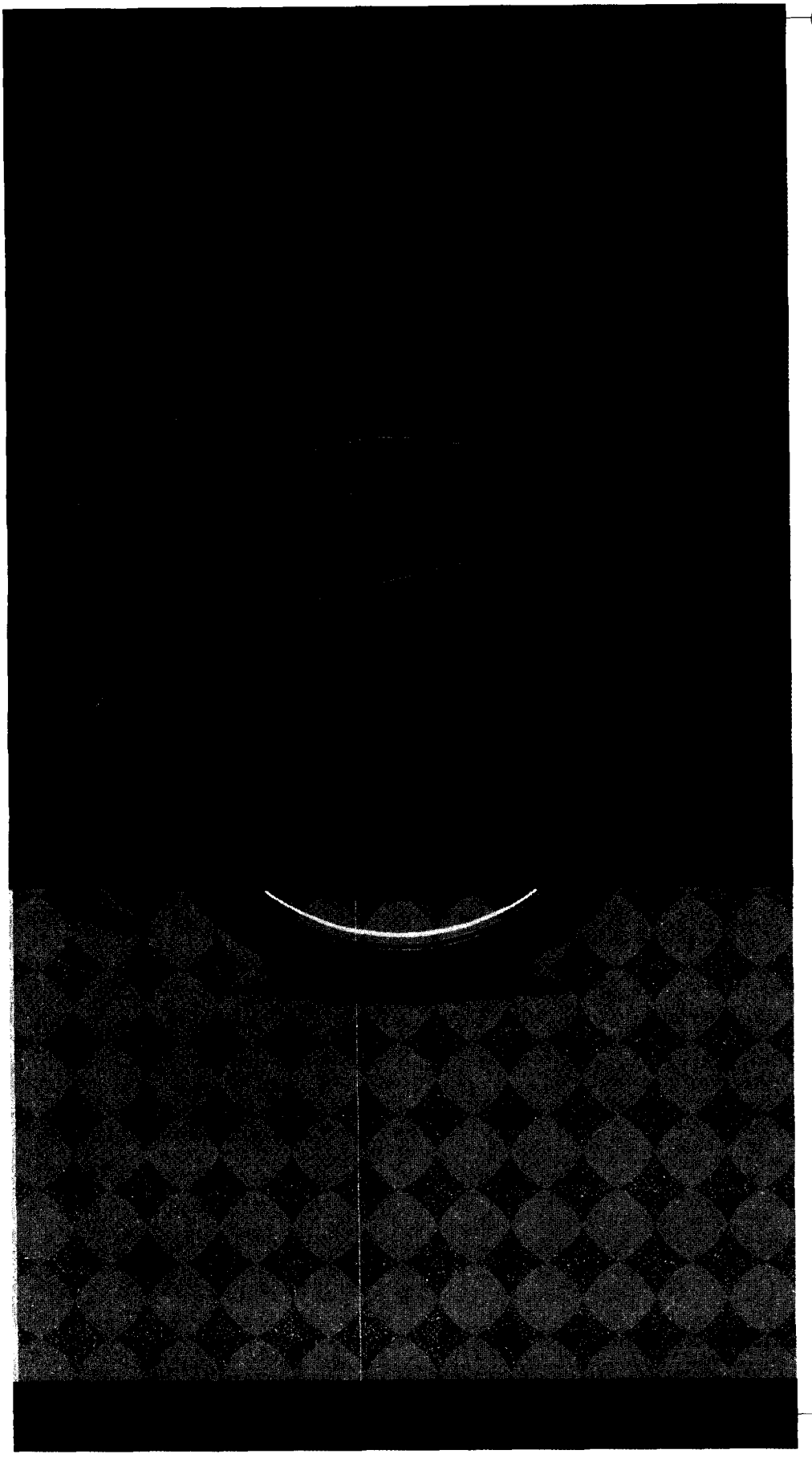

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continued from preceding page

their mountaintops cheer this "Second Industrial Revolution," the view from the front lines is not so rosy.

Too often, new devices are an uneasy fit with their sister machines of just a year ago. Too often, systems intended to simplify office life have the opposite effect. Grouses one manager: "The more business machines we buy, the more we seem to need."

Change is rampant. The stakes are high. Confusion is king.

◇

RASCALS. The best way to make sense of all this technology may be to ignore the whole business for a week or so and think about how your office works instead.

Who uses what kind of information? Where does it come from? What do they do with it?

No company on earth has pockets so deep that it can afford to automate every aspect of its business. Some hard choices lie ahead.

Item: In a typical office, 75% of the salary dollars go to managers and professionals. The system that spares these expensive rascals from a morning meeting or an hour of returning phone calls may be a better investment than one that does a whole day's work for someone else.

Item: The lion's share of time spent in any office is spent *communicating:* listening, talking, chasing down stray facts, dealing with mail.

Were you to keep a log, you'd be appalled by how little time you have for actually producing "work." (Par for senior executives: about 15%.)

To leverage time, look for ways to *move* information more efficiently.

A desktop computer can perform in minutes the spreadsheet analyses that used to gobble hours. But how much is gained if the figures still walk from office to office in a mail cart?

Item: Streamlining the internal workings of your office may be less profitable than automating ties with customers or suppliers.

Japanese style "just in time" deliveries from suppliers are helping U.S. automakers slash inventory costs. Computerized flight information systems have given some airlines a strategic advantage with travel agents.

No company succeeds alone.

◇

BALANCE. Complicating the question of where your systems dollar is best spent is where you spent it last time out. And the time before that. A lot of past choices are coming back to haunt today's manager.

Reason: most of the systems clicking away in offices today were purchased a la carte – when phones were phones, computers were computers, and "office automation" meant word processing and copiers.

Now the walls between these separate technologies are tumbling down.

Some office telephone systems can now process data. Computers have evolved that can communicate.

It's dawning on customers and vendors alike that the future belongs to

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Today's customer must strike a balance between making the most of what's on hand and fighting like crazy to keep next year's options open.

the *integrated* business system.

Today's customer must strike a balance between making the most of what's on hand and fighting like crazy to keep next year's options open.

◇

MISSING LINKS. Between today's a la carte systems and the office-wide, integrated everything of tomorrow is . . . what?

For many companies, the missing links are *networks.* By permitting different kinds of computers and other devices to share information, networks can pull today's stand-alone business machines into organized "islands" of automation.

Since these islands themselves can be networked together, users can widen the scope of automation in an organization pretty much at will.

Some companies have the backbone of an *office-wide* network already in place. Today's digital telephone switching systems (PBXs) convert speech into the same "bits" and "bytes" that computers use.

This means that many an existing telephone network can double as a highway for business data – and that "office automation" need have no geographic limits.

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◇

SUCCESS. Like the first Industrial Revolution, this one will lift some companies and confound others.

Those without a coherent plan to manage information in *all* its forms – the spoken word, thoughts on paper, images, and computer data – will be at a disadvantage.

In the long run, your success with office automation will have less to do with whose machines you buy — or how many — than with how freely information travels among them. It is the relationships you set up *between* the machines, not the devices themselves, that will tell the tale.

P.S. Much of this message was drawn from *The Integration Puzzle,* a two-day seminar offered by AT&T's Institute for Communications and Information Management. For further information or for a catalogue of AT&T Seminars in eight cities, please telephone 1 800 247-1212.

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sily Aksyonov's prose and Sergei Esenin's poetry. In any case, Esenin was an Imagist, not a Symbolist.

One also wishes Miss Eberstadt had been more gentle toward John Updike and Richard Lourie, whom she disparages for their "limited frame of reference" in finding Chekhovian qualities in Trifonov's prose. At least these critics did not do to Yuri Trifonov what Miss Eberstadt does to Vladimir Maximov by ascribing to the latter a direct quotation from Chekhov. The famous line about "pressing the slave out of himself" actually comes from one of Chekhov's letters. For Miss Eberstadt's sake, perhaps Maximov should have used a footnote.

In general, Vladimir Maximov does not seem to fare too well at the hands of his critic. Miss Eberstadt ascribes to him not only someone else's words but also someone else's ideas. Thus, she presents him as the "direct heir" of Nikolai Berdyaev, who, Miss Eberstadt reminds us, believed that "the Soviet state . . . institutionalized and brought to perfection all that was monstrous in the Russia of the czars." As it happens, Maximov is one of the more vocal proponents of the *opposite* school of thought which holds that the Communist state represents a radically new political structure and that any suggestion of continuity between czarist autocracy and Soviet totalitarianism is a dangerous political fallacy. Since Miss Eberstadt, by ascribing to Maximov the very views he rejects, actually imagines she is praising Maximov—she even calls him a genius—the effect is quite amusing.

Miss Eberstadt informs her readers that the *Metropol* almanac, coedited by Vassily Aksyonov, "was published aboveboard but free of censorship." She says nothing, though, about *where* it was published, creating the impression that Aksyonov managed to have an uncensored literary collection published by a government printing press. Such apparent resourcefulness on Aksyonov's part certainly tallies with the picture Miss Eberstadt draws of him: "[A] Komsomol hippie. . . . An official rebel of the regime, one who even at the worst of times got to go to film festivals in Buenos Aires and to accept lectureships in the United States." The truth of the matter, of course, is that the *Metropol* collection appeared in *samizdat* form; that it, like so much other free Russian literature, was published in the West; that the Soviet authorities unleashed a campaign of harassment against its contributors and editors; and that Aksyonov resigned from the Writers' Union in protest after two of his fellow editors were penalized by the Soviet literary establishment. All this information, incidentally, is to be found in some of the reviews mentioned in Miss Eberstadt's article; one wonders, therefore, whether she in fact read the sources she so disdainfully quotes.

To drive home her point about Aksyonov's alleged literary collaboration with the regime, Miss Eberstadt lays particular emphasis on his 1963 *Pravda* recantation in which Aksyonov, after having been personally attacked by Khrushchev, promised to conform. Judging anyone on the basis of a statement made under duress is ethically questionable. In Aksyonov's case, it is also incorrect. That despite his forced recantation, he, along with other writers of his generation, still managed to create genuine literature in the Soviet cultural wasteland testifies, if anything, to the power of aesthetic resistance. (His emigration in 1980 proves that this resistance has its limits.) To confuse survival with servility, though, is either naive or invidious.

Miss Eberstadt concedes that "few novels of recent years have been greeted with such acclaim as has *The Burn*." To be sure, she offers her own explanation of Aksyonov's success: "a literary bias in favor of the difficult." The fatuity of this observation aside, it must be noted that Miss Eberstadt's descriptions of Aksyonov's work do not seem to accord with each other. Thus, the style of *The Burn* is alternately characterized as too primitive, "an inventory of a duty-free store," and too complex, "a web of literary allusions." One wishes Miss Eberstadt were less self-contradictory in her complaints.

Her sharpest criticism, however, Miss Eberstadt reserves for what she perceives as the anti-Americanism of *The Burn*: "Aksyonov is no dissident. His flower children go to

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demonstrations, but these are demonstrations protesting U.S. intervention in Vietnam. The American Patrick Thunderjet calls his country a whore, a monstrous octopus, a bag of half-dead protoplasm, the American flag a 'puke-covered bedsheet.'" Moreover, the author himself, in her opinion, is as anti-American as his characters. Commenting on Aksyonov's essay, "An Exile in Literary America," Miss Eberstadt states: "Aksyonov [is] . . . getting paid to complain about American mass culture." Confusing the author with his characters is a cheap shot, while censuring the Soviet-born Aksyonov for displaying insufficient reverence toward American mass culture is ludicrous. Should émigré writers be required to profess loyalty not only to the flag and to the Constitution, but to the weekly list of best-sellers as well?

In regard to Aksyonov's "Success and the Soviet Writer," where he observes that, despite his literary fame, he was certainly not as well-off in Moscow as might be supposed, Miss Eberstadt declares: "One wonders what his late mother, a courageous woman gifted with the highest intellectual capacities, would think of these whinings, she who after ten years in Stalinist camps rejoiced while still in exile to be given the luxury of teaching music to kindergartners." To bolster her argument against Aksyonov, Miss Eberstadt tries to make an ally out of his late mother. Even by the standards set by Miss Eberstadt in her *ad-hominem* journalism, this is indecent.

ILYA LEVIN

Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Fernanda Eberstadt undertook the arduous task of evaluating what seemed to her a representative cross-section of contemporary Russian literary dissent in the apparent belief that having made a train trip through Siberia enabled her to do so. By the same token, a Russian spy on an outing to the Silicon Valley might imagine himself an expert on John Steinbeck. In fact, his claim would be better justified, since it must be presumed he would know some English.

Let me first make a few points, in the sequence in which they occur in the text. Miss Eberstadt claims some Soviet poets were "selling 100,000 copies of their books in advance orders alone." Nothing could be further from actual Soviet publishing practice in which books are published in a quantity determined in advance by the authorities, who are notorious for ignoring the conditions of the market. She mentions Ilya Ehrenburg and Leonid Leonov in the same breath as Yuri Trifonov, innocent of the fact that in their most representative work the first two have as much resemblance to the latter as James Joyce or Pynchon to Henry James. . . .

While reviling Vassily Aksyonov she adds to his curriculum vitae a 1975 "stint as visiting lecturer at the mecca of flower children, Berkeley, California." Yet the actual stint took place at UCLA, that citadel of learning—a small point to make, but it ruins such a clever argument. . . . She claims that Maximov's *Ark for the Uncalled* "is one of the few émigré works published in the last few years actually to have been written after its author's arrival in the West." There are hundreds of such works, and some of them may even—dare I say it?—rival Maximov's masterpiece.

Miss Eberstadt counts Esenin among the Symbolists and seems to have an idea that Erofeev's *Moscow to the End of the Line* is a realistic depiction of drinking habits and practices in Soviet Russia. She traces Maximov's spiritual descent from Chaadayev and Berdyaev, which is about as accurate and fruitful as to derive Leo Buscaglia from Cotton Mather. And to top it all off, she seems to be objecting to the insolence of the authors who dare to write their works in Russian, thus rendering many of their points incomprehensible to her, as in the case of Aksyonov's *Surplussed Barrelware*, which made an enormous splash in Soviet literature and is still loved and cherished by those whom it stopped in their tracks in the mid-60's. It may come as a surprise to Miss Eberstadt, but there are millions of people where Aksyonov comes from who understand every single word in that book.

There is little in this collection of curiosities that an average college professor of Slavic literature in this country is incapable of saying, and I would not have paid much attention to it, had it not appeared in COMMENTARY, whose enviable standards I have learned to respect. My main objection to Miss Eberstadt's hatchet job, however, is much broader and more in the realm of aesthetics as opposed to the simple ideological calculus that

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she seems more comfortable with.

Recently, certain publications subscribing to values similar to those of COMMENTARY have criticized a concept of literature and literary criticism which they perceive as typically leftist and which consists in a writer's first having an ideological ax to grind and only then paying attention to the quality of the grinding job. It has been pointed out that the task of literature, and indeed of the arts in general, is to create its own values which should not be judged on political, ideological, or utilitarian grounds. What Miss Eberstadt seems to be doing is judging literature precisely by the same criteria used by Soviet literary authorities —except that her grading system is diametrically opposite.

Thus, she seems to be dimly aware of certain literary merits present in Trifonov's work, but dismisses them as "marginal"; instead, she prefers to grade his writings according to their anti-Soviet content, predictably assigning higher marks to those more critical of the Soviet regime. This reminds me of a certain Soviet schoolteacher who once tried to instill in my soul a love of Chekhov by pointing out how wonderful he was in exposing the social vices of the petty bourgeoisie. Faithful to this tried and true method, Miss Eberstadt is absolutely ecstatic about Maximov who, being the most anti-Soviet among the writers she is considering, is promoted by her to the rank of Thomas Hardy. . . .

I cannot end this letter without dealing with another matter that seems to me rather grave. It is obvious to anyone who knows the subject that Miss Eberstadt is supremely unqualified to tackle this topic, . . . knowing as little as she does about Russian literature, life, and language. It is therefore even more lamentable that she dares to pronounce such a harsh judgment on Vassily Aksyonov—and not only on his works, which are, in any case, out there for anybody to see, but on his life and conscience. Thus, she glibly equates him with his characters—another interesting parallel with her Soviet counterparts who felt free to convict Yuli Daniel and Andrei Sinyavsky on a similar assumption. She blames him for having cut some corners while making a career as an official writer back in Russia, whereas it is amply evident that nobody—not a soul, literally—is exempt from such duty in the Soviet Union, and the higher one aims, the heavier the toll. At least Aksyonov had the guts to confess his sins openly. Miss Eberstadt is particularly aghast at hearing Aksyonov poke some innocent fun at the luminaries of contemporary American literature. Well, apart from the fact that Aksyonov is exercising his share of our constitutional freedom, and apart from the fact that his subjects may indeed be ridiculous, there is another argument that might assuage Miss Eberstadt's anxiety: Aksyonov is writing about *famous* American writers. She is, in fact, quite safe.

ALEXEI TSVETKOV
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . My deep conviction is that the future of the West, of Russia, and of the whole world is very much dependent upon knowledge of Russia by the West. The attention COMMENTARY has paid to the subject—for example, Norman Podhoretz's essay on Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn ["The Terrible Question of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn," February]—indicates that you have a similar point of view.

Unfortunately, the understanding of Russia by the majority of people in the West, including some intellectuals and influential public figures, is very poor. Fernanda Eberstadt's article is a case in point.

The first author Miss Eberstadt discusses is Yuri Trifonov, one of the best Russian writers of the 70's, whose novels were published in the USSR by official Soviet magazines and publishing houses. Miss Eberstadt praises Trifonov as an outstanding master of prose, but does not say a word about the main ideas expressed in his novels. Trifonov in fact concealed his ideas between the lines. Through seemingly insignificant but deeply symbolic trifles of his characters' lives we can see the image of the Soviet system with all its hypocrisy, cruelty, and inhumanity. Of course, Trifonov could not speak openly about all this; what's more, high-sounding declarations are not natural to his style of writing. This style was forged in his indirect but very hard struggle against Soviet censorship. But Miss Eberstadt fails to see this struggle and classifies it instead as collaboration.

Trifonov was silent for nearly a decade before he worked out his unique style, and not just because he had to go through the archives collecting materials to rehabilitate his father, as Miss Eberstadt seems to think.

Most readers in the USSR understood the real meaning of Trifonov's work quite well. That's why every one of his publications was considered an important event, and not just a literary but a political event as well. Everybody was anxious to get magazines with his novels; people waited in lines and paid exorbitant prices on the black market for his books. They admired his boldness and were afraid that Trifonov would not be allowed to publish anything else. But several months, maybe a year, would pass, and a new Trifonov novel would come out, and again there was surprise, astonishment, and joy on the part of his readers. And the same question—how could the authorities have allowed it?

Soviet critics, of course, also understood the exact meaning concealed in Trifonov's works, but they had to pretend it did not exist. Otherwise their reviews would have become denunciations of the author, and this kind of "literature," discredited after Stalin's death, has been abandoned even by KBG informers, who prefer to make their denunciations secretly. But it seems that all of this is unknown to Miss Eberstadt.

Presenting a picture of the constant growth of Trifonov's talent that is very different from reality, Miss Eberstadt pays special attention to the novel *The Old Man*: since it was his last novel, it is declared to be his best. (She does not discuss his real last work, *Time and Place*, because she believes it was not published in the USSR. But this is a mistake; the novel was published in Moscow shortly after Trifonov's death.)

But in *The Old Man*, probably having become tired after many years of struggle against censorship, Trifonov made many more concessions than in his previous works, especially *The House on the Embankment*, which, even though it had been officially published, became semi-legal.

In *The Old Man* the emphasis is not on modern life but on the past, and although Trifonov shows the horror and madness of the civil war with pitiless truthfulness, not inferior to the best pages of Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, he deliberately gives Jewish names to several party hacks and cutthroats, making a concession to official and

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semi-official propaganda, which constantly reiterates that all the evil in Russia comes from Jews. That's why even Trifonov's most devoted admirers were terribly disappointed by *The Old Man*. At that time, I still lived in Moscow, and remember it very well.

Vassily Aksyonov's novel *The Burn* differs from Trifonov's works in many ways due to the different nature of their talents and temperaments. But the major distinction between them is that Trifonov's prose and Aksyonov's novel had different purposes. Trifonov wrote for censored Soviet publications and he had to use a special style of allusions and omissions. Aksyonov, during most of his literary career, in a sense, did the same thing, but in a different manner. While Miss Eberstadt did not even notice Trifonov's allusions, she noticed Aksyonov's, but failed to understand them even with the help of the translators' footnotes. But from the very beginning *The Burn* was written to be published in the West without censorship. That's why there are no allusions there, everything is said openly and directly.

This does not mean that the novel is simple. It is very complex, and I can understand some readers who find it difficult to follow the author's imagination. He moves his heroes in time and space, transforms dreams into reality, reality into illusion. Even the same character appears under five different names, has five different professions and biographies. But let me repeat: the ideas are expressed openly and directly. It is a desperate cry about how Soviet totalitarianism killed the hopes of the author's generation.

Nevertheless, Miss Eberstadt has managed not to notice this, either. She tendentiously selects a few facts from the author's biography and describes him as a Soviet conformist who received extra benefits from the authorities and served them. Aksynov appears guilty for being popular among Soviet youth, for his trips abroad, and, of course, for publicly admitting his "mistakes" in 1963. From these selected facts (not from the novel's plot) Miss Eberstadt concludes that *The Burn* is not an anti-Soviet, but an anti-American (!) novel.

I can hardly believe that this conclusion is the result only of misunderstanding. It indicates that Miss Eberstadt became very angry with Aksyonov. Why? She does not write about it directly, but those who are experienced in reading between the lines understand her without difficulty.

Miss Eberstadt disliked Aksyonov's article, "An Exile in Literary America." In this article Aksyonov criticized some aspects of American literary life, in which, from his point of view, commercial success is often considered to equal real literary value. But if Miss Eberstadt did not agree with Aksyonov on this point, no one would have prevented her from arguing with him. Unfortunately, she chose another debating route, the path that has become unpopular even in Soviet literature: defamation of one's opponent. . . .

SEMYON REZNIK
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Out of the Drawer and Into the West" Fernanda Eberstadt exhibits an unwarranted hostility toward the work of Vassily Aksyonov, one of the best "Third Wave" Russian writers now in the West.

Miss Eberstadt dislikes both Aksyonov's fiction and his commentaries on Soviet and American literary life. In the latter she perceives little but the "whining" and "self-pity" of a writer who falsely thinks he has not received his due in this country.

"Whining" is a matter of tone, and tone a matter of the reader's perception, but I find nothing of that "self-pity" which Miss Eberstadt so deprecates either in Aksyonov's article, "Success and the Soviet Writer," on the Soviet literary world or in "An Exile in Literary America," where Aksyonov discusses literary men in the West. Precisely because of his adaptability (in the good sense) and his relative success in this country as well as in the Soviet Union, Aksyonov is uniquely qualified to analyze the literary milieus in both societies. His remarks in both instances strike me as intelligent and perceptive.

In "Success and the Soviet Writ-

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er" Aksyonov offers a clear-eyed view of the political conditions under which a writer in the Soviet Union must function, the political foundations of the split between literary fame and fortune there. He also writes that "while I am disgusted by the Soviet model of literary success, I am not going to glorify its Western counterpart." Once in the 19th century Ivan Turgenev had to steer the exiled Alexander Herzen away from the error Aksyonov avoids on his own, that of deciding everything must be splendid in Russia because he understood all the weaknesses of West European culture.

In his second piece, Aksyonov skillfully analyzes the shortcomings of American culture, especially in his account of an exchange with a novelist who said he wrote "best-sellers" except that they did not sell. The serious observer knows that at any given time "best-sellers" follow very standardized and generally meretricious patterns, while more serious and original writing rarely finds a large market. Aksyonov's point is well taken, but Miss Eberstadt seems to share the assumption common to many American commentators that former Soviet intellectuals now in this country should refrain from offering even constructive criticism of American culture. Aksyonov views himself as a constructive critic of American culture, and we should be grateful to him for that.

Miss Eberstadt also focuses her scorn upon Aksyonov's novel *The Burn* and its enthusiastic reception among Western critics and readers. In general I share her dislike of *The Burn*, but it illustrates very well Aksyonov's own point about "best-sellers." *The Burn* contains many elements of a best-seller, and it has indeed sold well. *The Island of Crimea* is a more serious book and makes an important point. But it is downplayed by the critics, including Fernanda Eberstadt.

CHARLES A. MOSER
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.

FERNANDA EBERSTADT writes:

I am grateful to Vassily Aksyonov's friends, Messrs. Levin, Tsvetkov, and Reznik, for correcting me on a number of simple and careless errors, although I must confess myself astonished by the barbarity of their literary manners.

As to the errors:

(1) Aksyonov held a visiting lectureship in 1975 not at Berkeley but at UCLA. (2) *Metropol*, the literary almanac of which Aksyonov was an editor, although originally intended to be published both aboveboard *and* free of censorship, in fact only appeared as *samizdat* in the Soviet Union. (3) Yuri Trifonov's last novel, *Time and Place* (which according to a brief memoir by his English translator Michael Glenny in *Britain-USSR* No. 60, January 1982, remained unpublished due to problems with the authorities over its contents), has since appeared in print. (4) Vladimir Kornilov remains in the Soviet Union. (5) Sergei Esenin, the influential Russian poet who first welcomed the revolution as the realization of his utopian dreams and soon wrote poignant poems of disillusionment, was indeed the foremost—and perhaps the only major —representative of the Imagist school. (6) By an error of transcription, I misattributed Chekhov's famous line, "pressing the slave out of himself," to Vladimir Maximov.

In addition, Mr. Tsvetkov writes that I am mistaken in supposing that genuinely popular Soviet poets could ever have been printed in quantities of 100,000. Although I am aware of the peculiar disjunction between supply and demand existing in his motherland—a country in which the only literary works likely to get produced en masse are the late Leonid Brezhnev's *Virgin Lands* or the love poems of the late Yuri Andropov—I took my authority from Patricia Blake's superb introduction to *Halfway to the Moon* (1964), where she writes: "Editions of 100,000 copies of Yevtushenko's books have sold out within the first forty-eight hours of publication. Advance orders alone for Voznesensky's third book of verse, *The Triangular Pear* (1962), reached 100,000 two months before publication."

Both Mr. Tsvetkov and Mr. Levin assert that, far from there being any spiritual connection between the religious philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev and the novelist Vladimir Maximov, it is precisely to Berdyaev's school of thought that Maximov is most vehemently opposed. They are mistaken. In his emphasis on individualism and on the spiritual life of a society, in his mistrust of Western materialism, technology, and boundless faith in progress, and in his rather apocalyptic view of the prospects for a humanity fallen away from God, Maximov consciously looks back to Berdyaev and to the poet and lay theologian Vladimir Soloviev. Maximov himself confirmed this in a Radio Liberty broadcast aired April 4, 1974, in which he stated that his "point of departure" is in fact "the old traditions of Russian literature" and the "school of philosophy" that began with Soloviev and ended with Berdyaev.

Moving on to graver issues, I should like to correct certain misapprehensions of Messrs. Levin, Tsvetkov, and Reznik—both about what I wrote in my article and about American life and literary culture in general. Since their letters are remarkably similar in outlook and argument, I hope I may be permitted to deal with them collectively.

Disturbed that I criticized Aksyonov, the three gentlemen adduce two explanations for my unkindness: that I failed to "get" Aksyonov's literary allusions, and that I mistakenly identified him as anti-American. As I wrote in my article, Aksyonov's is an intricately allusive style, crammed with poetical echoes, brand names, slogans, private jokes, puns, and wordplays. The question that always arises in works that depend on topical allusion is not one of the reader's competence to locate specific meanings but whether the author can be said to have succeeded in making his allusions serve a larger artistic purpose. In English literature this question can be addressed to such topical masterpieces as Pope's "Dunciad," Dryden's "The Hind and the Panther," Swift's *The Tale of a Tub*, Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," or, famously in our day, the novels of James Joyce. It becomes doubly pertinent in the case of a work in translation. One simple test is whether the work is meaningful even to an educated reader unfamiliar with its references. Aksyonov strikes out. His impenetrably allusive style, reaching its apogee in *Surplussed Barrelware* (in which the 68-page title story is accompanied by 118 footnotes), doesn't travel well, as the clumsiness of the book's English title vividly demonstrates. That the stories in the original might have brought pleasure to "millions" of Russians is a proposition I am willing to entertain, though with skepticism; it is cold comfort to 240 million Americans.

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Mr. Levin, in particular, finds me inconsistent in calling Aksyonov's style simultaneously too primitive and too complex. I didn't. *The Burn*, unlike Aksyonov's earlier and more consciously "literary" works, derives much of its dramatic effect and meaning from another kind of allusiveness—the use of brand names to summon up a man's character. This device is hardly peculiar to Aksyonov, being much in vogue as well among American writers of his generation, although put by them to very different literary purposes. Whereas an Ann Beattie or a Frederick Barthelme will invoke K-Marts, Bass shoes, or Dairy Queens to conjure up the crassness of modern life, Aksyonov in *The Burn* plies his designer labels to create an aura of cosmopolitan raffishness and glamor. (Conversely, love, sex, fame, and even patriotism seem to be reduced in this novel to the status of designer brand names.)

More serious is the charge that I judge Aksyonov and others not on their literary merits but on political grounds: that I praised Maximov's novels because their author is anti-Soviet and found fault with *The Burn* because I imagined its author to be "anti-American." To the contrary: it is my critics who have introduced their own political claques and vendettas into what is essentially a literary discussion. To list a few points: (1) Vladimir Maximov, whom I rated above Aksyonov as an artist, is by several magnitudes more critical than Aksyonov of Western—and specifically American—culture. (2) I praised Yevgeny Yevtushenko for certain of his literary accomplishments though that cynical lackey of the Soviet regime has filled Madison Square Garden with his lyrical denunciations of the United States. (3) My critics are inconsistent. In the case of Aksyonov they fault me for "politicizing," but when it comes to Yuri Trifonov my error is alleged to be a failure to read politically (i.e., "between the lines"). Which will it be, gentlemen?

On the issue of anti-Americanism, Mr. Levin confuses two separate matters—my description of the ideas expressed by characters in *The Burn* and my evaluation of Aksyonov's own attitudes as conveyed in his article, "An Exile in Literary America." The flaws for which I criticized *The Burn*—a reliance on cheap effects, an inability or unwillingness to create genuine characters or story, and a certain vulgarity of thought—are preeminently literary liabilities, not political sins, and I so stated. As for Aksyonov's article, I most emphatically did *not* characterize the ideas in it as anti-American. Aksyonov was merely being critical of American culture. Now in Messrs. Levin's, Tsvetkov's, and Reznik's native country, complaining publicly about the national culture may be tantamount to treason; hence, perhaps, their confusion. In the United States it is a favorite pastime, especially among academics, and one that I am sorry Aksyonov has acquired so reflexively. Yet contrary to what his defenders (and Charles A. Moser) suppose, I was not taking issue with Aksyonov's mockery of our literary lions, or with his conceit of the author who writes best-sellers that don't sell. What I objected to was Aksyonov's scorn for that phantom of the elite imagination, "mass culture." A foreigner's fresh view of American culture (however negative) would be a pleasure; his mouthing of misconceived clichés is dreary.

Aksyonov's article begins with the author's astonishment, after attending an Amherst theater conference, at turning on the television set in his hotel room only to find no mention made on the evening news of an event which had included such luminaries as Derek Walcott and Arthur Miller. This disappointment is just a microcosm of Aksyonov's larger disillusion with American culture, which he had imagined to be in thrall to the avant-garde but which instead is a slave to "mass-market values" and the best-seller list.

Apart from the comical aspects of this attitude, which Aksyonov shares with many American intellectuals who feel that college arts symposiums should be made to take precedence on the evening news over bombings in Beirut or the Reagan tax plan, there is a serious fallacy here. Popular American culture is neither so low nor so homogeneous nor so hostile to foreign talent as Aksyonov (and indeed Mr. Moser) would have it. A recent week's best-seller list in the New York *Times Book Review* included (questions of relative quality aside) the works of writers as diverse as Aksyonov's hero Ernest Hemingway, John Updike (who reviewed Aksyonov favorably in the *New Yorker*), Marguerite Duras, John Irving, and Herman Wouk, as well

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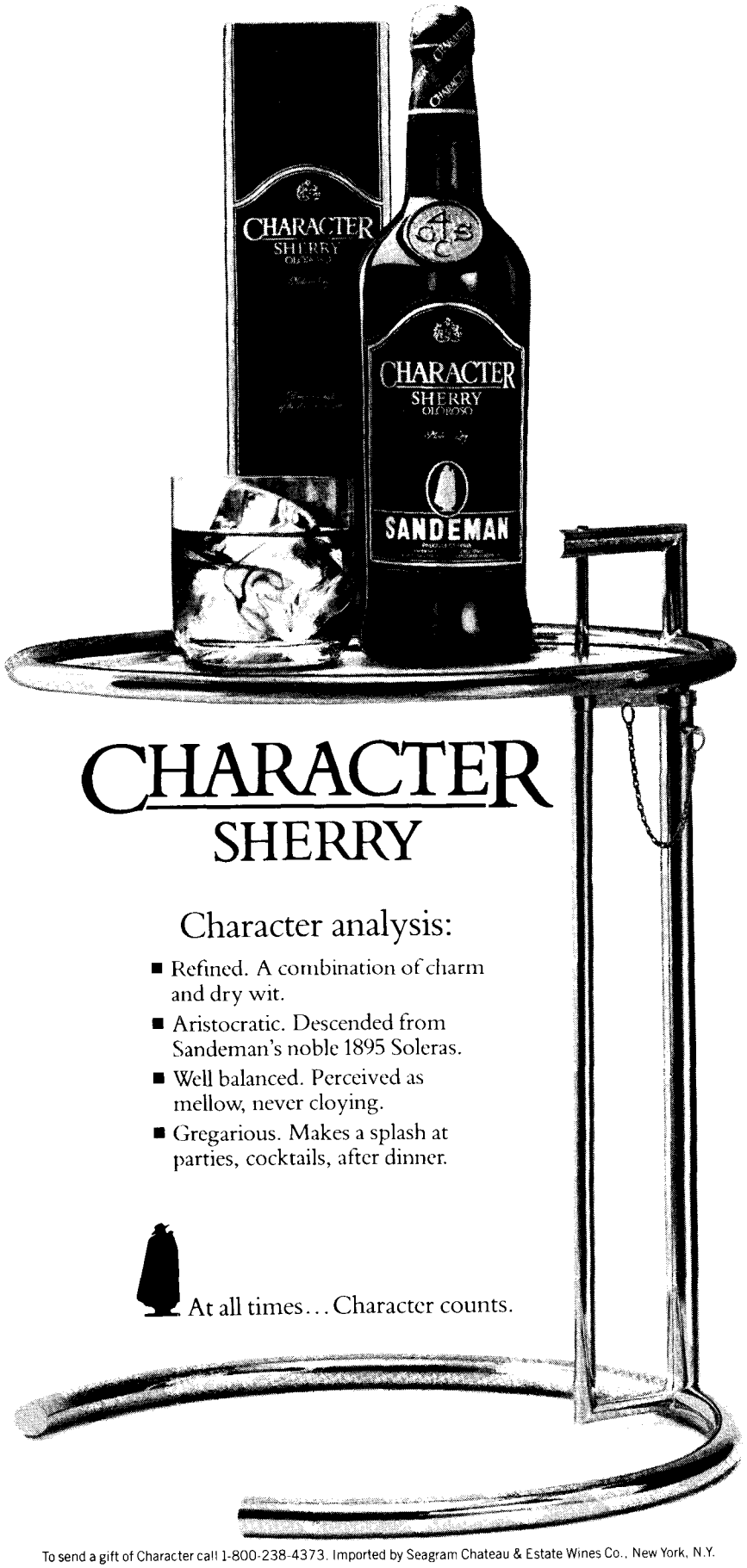
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as family sagas, spy stories, and Westerns by such able though very different masters of the genre as Louis L'Amour and Larry McMurtry. Not to mention the recent wildfire success of *The Name of the Rose*, by the Italian semiotician Umberto Eco. Above all, the best-seller list is an open market. Mr. Aksyonov too may well find a place on it one day, becoming almost as popular an author among American readers as he was in his native Russia.

I would like to thank Vladimir Maximov for his kind letter, and also Mr. Moser. I was interested to learn from Mr. Reznik that Russian readers felt Trifonov had succumbed to official pressure in *The Old Man*. I find Trifonov a delicate and powerful writer, who, as I wrote in my article, poignantly conveys "the erosion of self-worth and the steady hemorrhaging of the soul" induced by life under Communism. Yet I nevertheless maintain that for a novelist of the first rank to design his work to be read between the lines does represent a kind of artistic defeat, and that Trifonov's perilous accommodation to state censorship is indeed an example of what Max Hayward called "the noblest type of collaboration."

Who Is a Psychoanalyst?

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The August issue contains a letter I wrote discussing an article by Joseph Adelson and Chester E. Finn, Jr., "Terrorizing Children" [April]. The authors commented on my letter.

In my letter I agreed with them that Robert Jay Lifton, one of several people they mentioned in their article, whom they identified as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, could be faulted for showing intellectual bad faith and corrupting his scientific and professional values in the interest of furthering his missionary cause, which was to attempt to prove that there is general and widespread anxiety about the possibility of nuclear war among the nation's children.

I went on to point out the similarity of what Dr. Lifton has done to what is being done in the Soviet Union by Dr. Andrei Snezhnevsky, whose sloppy and uncritical thinking and failure to use minimal scientific controls have provided the "scientific" cloak of respectability for the psychiatric abuse of

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political dissent in the Soviet Union. Messrs. Adelson and Finn did not comment on this portion of my letter.

I pointed out, however, that they were in error in identifying Dr. Lifton as a psychoanalyst. I documented my statement from the various professional directories. I also noted that Dr. Lifton did not consider himself a psychoanalyst, but rather thought of himself as a writer and as a psychohistorian—something which I have heard from Dr. Lifton directly. I said further that Dr. Lifton had misidentified himself in a major professional directory as a psychoanalyst, which may have been the basis for the error made by Messrs. Adelson and Finn. (I might have added, but did not, that for them to identify Dr. Lifton as a psychoanalyst was incorrect not simply because he lacks psychoanalytic credentials, but also because he does not obtain his data by the psychoanalytic method.)

In their reply to me, while not contesting these statements, they went on to say: "He ought to remember that 'psychoanalyst' is not an official title, that a great many training institutions confer that designation quite legitimately, and that it is not up to him to determine by fiat just who is and is not a psychoanalyst."

This comment clearly contains a misleading distortion of my remarks. I did not *determine* that Dr. Lifton is not a psychoanalyst; I pointed out that he *was* not one, uncontestably, and did not *himself* consider that he was, to my direct and personal knowledge. At this point it seemed to me that Messrs. Adelson and Finn had other fish to fry in bringing up this matter as they did. This impression was heightened when they went on to introduce, *de novo*, a remark which is wholly irrelevant to the point at issue. They referred to a letter of mine printed in the Sunday New York *Times*, May 19, 1985: "Dr. Post seems bent on becoming the Torquemada of psychotherapeutic credentialism, e.g., he recently sent a letter to the New York *Times* taking Sigmund Freud to task for having had Anna Freud trained in psychoanalysis."

This is mischievously inaccurate. It misrepresents and distorts what I said, and is taken wholly out of context. In my letter, titled by the *Times* "And Now the Age of the Barefoot Psychotherapist," I traced the historical, social, and economic antecedents of the present wave of independent lay practitioners of psychotherapy who no longer have psychiatric and medical supervision, as they did when they were initially pressed into service in mental hospitals and outpatient clinics. I pointed out that they lack the medical and psychiatric training which is the only basis for diagnosis and treatment. I stated, there and elsewhere, that since they function willy-nilly as primary-care physicians (a task for which they are wholly incompetent), they were consequently responsible for much malpractice. I pointed out finally that Gresham's Law is having the effect of discouraging medical students from entering the field of psychiatry to emerge as the peers of a multitude of lay therapists with lesser academic and apprentice training, and that all of this combines to produce a current crisis for the public health. I stated that nepotism prevents many psychiatrists, from Freud's day to the present, from speaking frankly about this problem because of their conflict of interest.

Messrs. Adelson and Finn quite clearly did not like what I had to say about lay psychotherapists. That is their privilege, although my *Times* letter, which has been republished in several places including the *Internatonal Herald Tribune*, has received widespread approval from my professional colleagues and disinterested parties. But that they would drag the *Times* letter in by the heels, gratuitously, irrelevantly, and in a manner designed to misrepresent and distort, is surprising. Perhaps not totally surprising, though, since one of the authors is a psychologist, and not wholly disinterested in the issue he raises.

To paraphrase them, I would not have believed it possible, but their comments leave me in greater sympathy with Dr. Lifton. If their statements about me are indicative of their scholarly accuracy and ethics, then I will have to reevaluate my opinion of their criticism of Dr. Lifton.

SEYMOUR C. POST, M.D.
College of Physicians and Surgeons
Columbia University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In the August letters section, Seymour C. Post attacks Robert Jay Lifton for identifying himself as a psychoanalyst and implies that Dr. Lifton discredited the American Academy of Psychoanalysis through "politically motivated activity."

As president of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis, I want to state emphatically that Dr. Lifton is a respected member of the Academy and that this organization is certainly not discredited by his activity.

SIDNEY S. GOLDENSOHN, M.D.
American Academy of
Psychoanalysis
New York City

JOSEPH ADELSON and CHESTER E. FINN, JR. write:

We hope—we pray—that Sidney S. Goldensohn's letter puts to an end this increasingly strange correspondence, on one of the most trivial issues facing America—whether Robert Jay Lifton is entitled to the title of "psychoanalyst." He is, he *is*, just as we said, and we trust Dr. Post can now find another outlet for his indignation.

Dr. Post is equally ill-informed, and even more abusive, on the question of who should do psychotherapy. Those interested in a rational and balanced presentation should read Freud's *The Question of Lay Analysis*, written sixty years ago and as fresh as the day it appeared. Freud was determined to save his creation from the intellectual provincialism he feared would follow its capture by the medical profession; and he wanted to recruit to psychoanalysis the best minds interested and available. Although he did not quite succeed, he did not quite fail, either. The fruitful era following his death is marked by the contributions of a remarkable group of psychoanalysts drawn from non-medical disciplines—Anna Freud, Ernst Kris, Erik Erikson, Peter Blos, Selma Fraiberg, Joseph Sandler, Roy Schafer, to name only a few. Dr. Post would have banned all of them, and to judge by his letter, perhaps he would have had them locked up for malpractice.

He is right about one thing—psychiatry is in trouble. It cannot attract enough medical students, and what is worse, except at the best programs, those it does attract tend to be drawn from the bottom of the medical talent pool. It is of course a serious problem: it means that many mental hospitals are

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staffed by physicians of marginal quality. It also means that those needing good psychotherapy often pay high hourly rates for little more than a pill and a peptalk. *Caveat emptor.*

Somehow Dr. Post has developed the extraordinary idea that other professions, and not medicine itself, ought to be held responsible for this situation. Yet as everyone save Dr. Post seems to understand, a great part of the problem arises from the selection and training of physicians. Despite occasional efforts at reform, the medical schools continue to prefer those heavily educated in science, and (much of the time) mechanistic in outlook. These initial inclinations are then reinforced by the physicalistic bias of most medical teaching, and above all by the contempt for psychiatry openly expressed by so many of the medical faculty. As a medical student once told one of us, explaining his shift from psychiatry to internal medicine: "Real doctors don't think psychiatrists are real doctors." There are, of course, other deterrents, such as the unpleasant and at times dangerous conditions in some psychiatric institutions, but the major disincentives appear to be the low prestige of psychiatry in medical school and the discomfort so many physicians feel about the non-linear, non-reductionistic modes of thinking required in psychotherapeutic work—just as Sigmund Freud pointed out so many years ago.

Dr. Post's preoccupations have taken us a considerable distance from the original theme of our article—nuclear education. Since we have the readers' attention, here are the latest figures we have seen on adolescent worries. Nuclear fears have just about fallen off the chart, now ranking eleventh behind the following: school performance, looks, being liked, parents dying, how friends treat one, hunger and poverty, U.S. violence, losing a best friend, drugs and drinking, future unemployment, and one's physical development (*Harper's*, September 1985, citing a survey of 8,000 adolescents conducted by the Search Institute). So much for nuclear anxiety. Still, its withering away has had no apparent effect on the nuclear curricula designed to cure it. Those continue to flourish. Is anyone surprised?

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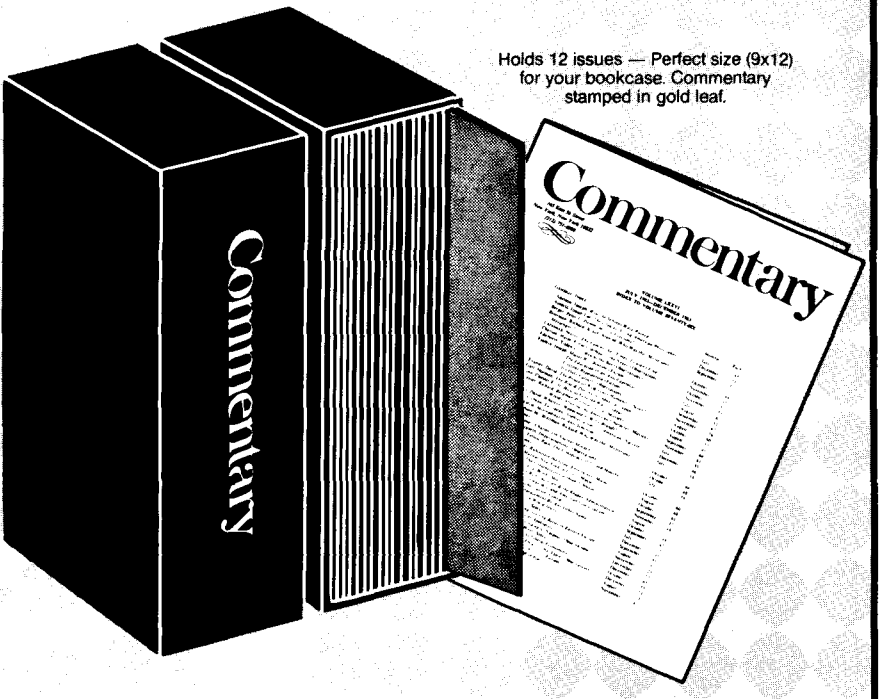

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How Has the United States Met Its Major Challenges Since 1945?

A Symposium

Exactly forty years ago, in the first issue of COMMENTARY *(November 1945), its founding editor, the late Elliot E. Cohen, wrote an introductory statement outlining the problems with which the new magazine would necessarily be concerned. The year 1945, Cohen said, "marks an epoch in world history." World War II had just ended, "yet we stand troubled and hesitant before the glorious era of peace which we have awaited so long. . . ."*

For one thing, there was the question of whether the "giant's strength, in production, in cooperation, in planning, in courage" which the United States had demonstrated in winning the war could be "mustered as greatly and as wisely for the arts of peaceful living. . . ." In addition, there was the "ultimate challenge" posed by the explosion only a few weeks earlier of the atomic bomb. And as if the destructive power of the bomb were not enough, there was "a force that, in the political and social scene, can wreak destruction comparable to the atomic bomb itself." This power was embodied in "the kind of thinking and feeling" that had led to the "colossal latter-day massacre of innocents, whether Jews or other 'minorities,'" and that (as subsequent issues of COMMENTARY *would make clear) had not disappeared with the destruction of Nazism in Germany but remained alive and well in the form of Soviet totalitarianism.*

To commemorate COMMENTARY*'s fortieth anniversary, the editors addressed these questions to a group of distinguished intellectuals:*

Looking back over the last forty years, how would you assess the response of the United States to the three challenges that Elliot Cohen saw as marking the new era born in 1945?

Has the "giant's strength" of the United States been as adequately applied to the "arts of peaceful living" as it had been to the fighting of the war?

How have we managed the "ultimate challenge" of nuclear weapons?

And finally, how successfully have we met the equally dangerous threat of totalitarianism?

The responses—twenty-nine in all—follow in alphabetical order.

This symposium is sponsored by the Harry Elson COMMENTARY *Fund.*

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Lionel Abel: The editors of COMMENTARY, referring to the interesting—and approving—comment of its founding editor, the late Elliot Cohen, on the conduct of the United States during World War II, have asked some of us to judge whether American behavior, over the past forty years, can be approved as well. More precisely, what has the United States done in response to its three greatest challenges? To answer this question we have to make some judgment of our country as a whole, for it can hardly be distinguished from its most important policies.

But can one properly judge one's country? I mean, politically. One can, of course, judge a particular policy chosen by the country's decision-makers. Thus many are critical today of President Reagan's new policy toward the Republic of South Africa. But can one totalize the policies of the country and then judge it as a whole? Now Noam Chomsky does exactly this every time he approaches a foreign-policy question (see his article on our policy in Central America in the *Journal of Contemporary Studies*, Spring-Summer 1985). In his piece the renowned radical announces that the American government is, and has been, opposed, or indifferent, to the promotion of democratic conditions in any part of the world outside our own borders. I take it that this is one of Chomsky's typically provocative exaggerations. But I do not want to judge the truth or falsity of this deliverance of his here, I only want to make clear what is its intent. It is nothing less than a political judgment of the country as a whole, and not just a judgment of one of its policies.

One can judge one's country morally, also aesthetically, without support from others, and without having to justify one's right to make such judgments. But can one in the same way judge one's country—once again, not just one of its policies—*politically*? I think not. For a judgment that is truly political cannot be made by just one person; it has to be made along with others, and anyone attempting such a judgment (one made with some others) can quite properly be asked just who those others are. If one is judging an American policy politically, one can judge it with Americans who prefer some other policy, but if one is judging *America* politically, and judging it unfavorably, this probably would only make sense if done along with the nationals of some other country. And in fact when America has been attacked in political terms, the attack has generally been made in support of the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, or some other Third World country. The currently favored "others," along with whom one nowadays attacks the United States politically, are the Sandinistas of Nicaragua and their allies among the guerrillas in El Salvador.

In the 18th century, it was thought—though not by Voltaire—that nationalism is the only form of selfishness that is ethically obligatory. And in the 19th century it was thought high-minded to give one's life for the fatherland. But the 20th century saw the birth of a very different political notion, namely, that one's own country can be, often has to be, regarded as one's *main* enemy. This idea, set forth by the Russian Bolsheviks, is political through and through and not literary, moral, or metaphysical, like the idea expressed by James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, who, when asked if he is prepared to die for his country, says "Let my country die for me." I take it he is (if serious) asserting that it is ethically obligatory for the great writer, who was to forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his country, to refuse to die for it. All the same I think the sally of Stephen Dedalus was prepared for by the war position of Lenin and his party: your country is your enemy. With what others could such a position have been taken by a subject of the Russian czar, whom even socialists like Plekhanov were ready, on patriotic grounds, to support against the Kaiser? With members of the international proletariat, of course, the final subject of history, according to the Marxist eschatology: with the international proletarians, whose selfish interests were to replace those of the nation as ethically binding on the individual.

That belief is no longer with us. There are workers and working-class groups in various countries, but there is no longer believed to be an international proletariat in the Marxist sense of the term. Hence if one is going to take a stand against one's own country, one has to postulate loyalty to some other country. And how is an American to find any larger, more progressive, or historically more to be trusted group than his fellow citizens? So if today one wants to criticize or attack the United States, not just one of its policies, one can properly be asked to say with what other country one's loyalty lies. That is, unless one is willing to say of one's politics what Paul Berman, in the *New Republic* (September 16, 1985), says about the actions of the "hip radicals" of the 60's, which he claims were based on "metaphysical" thinking. What he can mean by metaphysical thinking is surely not any kind of systematic thinking that I have been familiar with. But if he includes among the actions of the hip radicals the New Leftist demonstrations against the war in Vietnam, then I would say that the reason for the metaphysics in their politics was this: they could not attack America in the name of the international proletariat, and it would have been most unwise politically to announce their loyalty to North Vietnam (though in fact at the great peace rally held in Central Park in the 60's, certain New Leftists were honest enough to carry North Vietnamese flags). Yet if the peace movement were to win, then the United States had to lose, and in this sense the movement had to be in favor of victory for North Vietnam. And that is how Georg Lukács, who was opposed to metaphysics and certainly knew something about politics, celebrated

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in the *New Left Review* the Vietnamese victory over America when it came.

Now I think COMMENTARY is asking for a *political* judgment of America's conduct over the past forty years. What I have already said should indicate why I cannot altogether oblige. I do not want to criticize the country, though I am quite ready and even want to criticize its foreign-policy decisions since 1945. And I mean to be so critical here that I cannot allow myself to consider America's responses to its other main challenges. I am afraid to dwell on other problems of the country, since I cannot but condemn its responses in foreign-policy matters. Maybe I would also condemn its efforts in the "arts of peaceful living," and also its decisions about nuclear energy. Here is ground I, for one, fear to tread. But I will not be inhibited in discussing our response to Soviet totalitarianism, our main endeavor for the last forty years in foreign affairs.

In the days when Richard Nixon was the "people's" preferred villain, and not their chosen political guru on prime-time television, the point was made by the much-admired Anthony Lewis in his New York *Times* column, that when you come down to it foreign policy is not all that important. I do not recall Lewis's exact wording on this matter, but the version I have given retains the gist of it. Why bring it up now? Not just to catch Lewis out—undeniably a pleasure—but rather to point up the admission by a leading liberal "welfare statist" that foreign-policy problems are to him of minor importance. Not that he ignores them. Just think of all the columns he devoted to the Vietnam war, and more recently to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. But the interesting question is why Lewis made the admission he did.

His motive, I believe, was at the time a desire to downgrade the appeal of Henry Kissinger, whose shuttle diplomacy had been spectacular, and whose popularity Lewis evidently feared might rub off on President Nixon, already being targeted for "the people's" hatred. But I believe Lewis's admission reveals something of more moment than that on occasion even a *Times* journalist can be capable of candor. It is this: foreign policy cannot under any circumstance be of major importance to the "welfare statist," for the very good reason that in an area where conflict is essential one cannot solve problems by larger and larger handouts. A socialist state might conceivably—I am not too sure of this—find its own "socialist" solution to foreign-policy problems. The welfare state cannot. And so the only thing the "welfare statist" can do is what Anthony Lewis did on the occasion I cited. He can denigrate foreign policy as such.

In trying to answer just one of the questions asked by COMMENTARY, I must here point out that the United States under Ronald Reagan is still a welfare state, and has been throughout the Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter regimes, covering almost the whole period from the end of the war until today. Now a welfare state simply cannot have a "giant's strength" in foreign policy. In the middle of the 19th century, Tocqueville, in his amazingly astute study of American political institutions, noted that foreign policy would be a source of great difficulty for any American President. This was when we were not yet a welfare state, and when liberal journalists were not yet of the opinion that foreign-policy matters are not too important. I wonder what Tocqueville would have said about the difficulties in foreign policy for an American President today, after the disasters of Vietnam and Watergate, and the attacks of journalists and historians on what has been called the "Imperial Presidency." Actually, the most "imperial" of our Presidents was Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was also responsible for the legislation which gave us the welfare state, enlarged upon by his successors. And Roosevelt was personally responsible for terrible foreign-policy decisions (described in these pages only two months ago by John Colville in his article, "How the West Lost the Peace in 1945") which gave the Soviet Union control of Eastern Europe.

As the welfare state commenced under Roosevelt was extended by his successors, Democratic and Republican, so were the foreign-policy defeats and mistakes. We should not have permitted the Red Army to reach Berlin or Prague. We facilitated the Soviet occupation of these cities. Having yielded Eastern Europe to the USSR, we failed to support the rising of the East German workers in 1954, the revolts of the Hungarians and the Poles in 1956, of Czechoslovakia in 1968, of the Afghans in 1979, and the Poles in 1981. Let me add our failure to prevent Castro from coming to power in Cuba, and to sustain with funds the government of South Vietnam. Then there was our misguided policy in Iran: we could at the very least have used our influence with the French to prevent Khomeini's broadcasts into Iran from France.

Of course our defeats are well known, but I feel justified in listing them, for I would like something rather different: I would like them known well. I must add here that we did have two foreign-policy triumphs which perhaps owe something to, and are certainly in line with, our regular commitment to welfare. I have in mind the Marshall Plan and the Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel; both brought success through handouts, in the one case of money and credits and in the other of money and territory.

WHAT I want to make clear is that we should not aim first of all in foreign policy at instituting elsewhere the conditions obtaining in our own country. Often there is a contradiction between what we might think desirable elsewhere and what ob-

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tains here in the U.S. If we had not enjoyed democratic rights here, but had had a one-party state like the Soviets, having won the war we would also have won the peace. We would never have permitted the Soviets to claim title by right of conquest to German, Polish, Hungarian, or Czechoslovakian territory. We would never have allowed Stalin to absorb the Baltic states. Not as democrats, but as victors in the war, and the least exhausted power, we would have protected the self-determination of the states of Eastern Europe. They have paid the terrible price of enslavement to the Soviet Union largely because of our illusion that the example of good democratic behavior can be as effective as the force of arms.

But the Soviets do not imitate our behavior, they just laugh at it. Noam Chomsky thinks we do not want democracy outside our own borders. Others think we ought to at least represent the values of democracy and human rights everywhere. I hold that we cannot. The care for our own rights may in many an instance require us to be less careful of the rights of others; in neglecting others' rights, we will get further denunciations of our actions from Chomsky, but he is determined to denounce us whatever we do. We do not even know why we are here, but being here we shall have to defend ourselves. It would be a great mistake for us to think that we are here to save the world.

LIONEL ABEL, *playwright and critic, is professor emeritus of English literature at SUNY-Buffalo. His most recent book is* The Intellectual Follies: The Literary Venture in New York and Paris.

William Barrett: Forty years, and a very large chunk of history! The advent of the atomic bomb, the end of World War II, a bad peace, and the continuing stalemate between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. For some of us, it was the period of maturity when, after the war, we were free to take up our own private lives at last. If our private expectations have not always turned out as well as we projected them in that first rosy flush after V-J Day, neither have affairs in the big world. But best leave all these personal matters in the background, and turn directly to the business of COMMENTARY's three questions, which I shall deal with, for reasons that will become apparent, in a slightly different order: 1, 3, and 2.

The first question may harbor a misunderstanding. A society at peace cannot take the same degree of management and central direction as that same society at war—not if it doesn't want to go totalitarian. A free society requires a free economy; and capitalism performs better without too many central controls. And on the whole, our American capitalism has performed pretty well in these last forty years: there are more affluence, more jobs, and more productivity than ever before.

Yet at the same time the bureaucratic structure of the state has also been expanding, despite recent rhetorical flurries about cutting back or dismantling some of this structure. The nation-state, both in the democratic and the totalitarian countries, looms as the dominating institution of this historical period. People seem to desire its entitlements and require, though sometimes with grumbling, its controls. This is a direction of history that we shall have to watch carefully.

If the "arts of peaceful living" means the whole domain of culture, then our report must be somewhat negative. In high culture there have been some notable works in the period, but we have fallen into the habit of taking second-raters much too seriously. Anything like a proper evaluation, however, would require an examination of works within each field, and that I am not equipped to do. What can be done? A genuine renaissance *happens*, it cannot be managed into existence by some national administration and directed like a war effort.

As for popular culture, that seems, to my tender hearing at least, to have fallen on hard times. Technology now provides the young with the most ingenious devices for reproducing, amplifying, and dispersing sound to blast our ears. And so the thud of rock music goes on everywhere and at all moments. Let there be sound!—our culture seems to be possessed by a fearful dread of silence. What might help? Perhaps if our whole educational system were reformed so that genuine literacy prevailed, the young might once again become readers and have less time for television and tapes.

How successfully have we met the dangerous threat of totalitarianism? Not very successfully, I am afraid. And here we need not reproduce a long catalogue of our various retreats and bunglings since World War II; it is sufficient merely to point to the fact that the power and influence of the Soviet Union have spread throughout the world during this period. Not all of this spreading power has been due to our mistakes; the fact is that Marxist ideology and slogans continue to have a surprising appeal to various peoples and groups, and sometimes in the most amazing places. One should not be surprised that these slogans appeal to some peasants in Central America, who have neither the time nor the information to reflect on what Marxism has shown itself to be in the actual history of the Soviet Union. But we are surprised to find entrenched pockets of Marxism in the faculties of our universities. The "Will to Believe" is very potent; and, failing a genuine religion, some of our campus intellectuals seek a substitute in the secular religion of Marxism,

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which after all professes to give the scheme and meaning of human history. What to do? Alas, only time and repeated intellectual criticism may lead this lamentable faith to wither away.

Meanwhile the Soviet Union persists, and its political apparatus seems stable. Indeed, the stability of the Soviet Union throughout this whole period we are talking of seems to me a central fact of our time. But perhaps something of my own history leads me to place such emphasis upon this surprising stability.

At the beginning of this period I was a Marxist, a socialist, with something of Trotskyist leanings. Given this orientation, it was natural to believe that since the Soviet Union was a socialist country that had been temporarily captured by the Stalinist dictatorship, in due time the benign impulses of socialism would go to work and there would be a genuine liberalization of the regime. Needless to say, none of these things happened, and these general beliefs of mine have long since gone into the scrapheap. Then too, there was the vague expectation that conflicts among the ruling Soviet bureaucrats might lead to a palace revolution, as a consequence of which there might be some general popular upheaval. But again, nothing like this has happened; the bureaucracy seems to have mastered its own political machinery, particularly the smooth transmission of power. The economy may creak and stumble along, but the regime goes on so long as its political machinery remains intact and functioning. A refutation, incidentally, of the Marxist doctrine that the economic sphere is prior to the political.

Why should I emphasize this fact of Soviet stability so much? Because it gives the Soviets one more powerful tactic to rely on in their contest with America and the democracies. The Soviets need only hold firm, and sit and wait for the democracies to crack. If the possibility of America's giving up seems unimaginable to us, that may be because we think of it with the dramatic flourish of Lee surrendering at Appomatox. In fact, the yielding could take place piecemeal, bit by bit, and hardly be noticed along the way until at last it became clear that we had sunk to a secondary place. As the burdens of standing up to the challenge increase, the ordinary citizens of the democracies may grow restive. There may come moments when the harried taxpayer may wonder: IRS or KGB, what difference? Then the lure of the peace movements will become more attractive, the awesome specter of atomic war in the background will seem more threatening, and the resolve of the West will be further weakened.

So I come to question 2; I changed the order of my answers because I do not believe the nuclear challenge can be handled apart from a consideration of our relations with the Soviet Union.

How, then, have we managed the "ultimate challenge" of nuclear weapons? Well, in the last forty years there has been no nuclear war. That may not be much, but it is something. There is no easy recipe for dealing with the nuclear question. Our disarmament would be equivalent to surrender, and it is questionable whether that would bring a genuine peace. At the present, it seems to me, there is no other course for us to follow but to maintain all our strength, and to remain prudent in its exercise. The presence of a potent but prudent power on the world scene might, who knows, serve to bring about a real international order, in which genuine disarmament, with controls, might become possible. As yet, however, it seems to me we are very far from that.

IN LOOKING back at my answers, I detect a somewhat somber tone. I am sorry, but we do live in an awesome period when the future of human liberty may be decided for a long time to come.

WILLIAM BARRETT *is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Pace University. His books include* The Illusion of Technique, Irrational Man, *and* The Truants: Adventures Among the Intellectuals.

Peter L. Berger: One can well understand why Elliot Cohen, writing in 1945, would use the language he did. The United States had just triumphed in the most titanic war not only in its own history but in all human history, the evil nightmare of Nazism had been banished decisively, and it must indeed have seemed as if the enormous resources and energies that had accomplished the victory would now be released for the tasks of the "glorious era of peace . . . awaited so long." It is not disrespectful of Elliot Cohen to observe that there was an error implied in this expectation. The error is simple but far-reaching. It is to think that the strengths usable in war can be applied in times of peace. This is, very probably, never the case. War summons up whatever virtues of dedication, self-sacrifice, and heroism men are capable of. These virtues are of little relevance to the mundane demands of civilian life. If wartime strengths are not readily carried over into times of peace in any society, such carryover is particularly unlikely in a society shaped by the twin institutions of capitalism and democracy. Both are, by their very nature, contractual, pragmatic, prosaic, unheroic—in a word, civilian to the core. This, of course, is why societies cultivating the martial virtues have looked down on the "grubby commercialism" of democratic capitalism (as both the Nazis and the Japanese militarists looked down on America). World War II demonstrated how peoples as determinedly civilian as the Americans and the British can be mobilized for military exploits worthy indeed of a "giant's strength." But even then it

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should have been clear that a similar mobilization for peacetime tasks was not in the offing. At least under democratic capitalism there can never be a "moral equivalent of war"—a fact for which one can be grateful.

All the same, if one looks at the three great challenges spelled out by Elliot Cohen forty years ago, one may well conclude that America has survived them reasonably well. The first two—those of nuclear weapons and of totalitarianism—are precisely challenges that call for virtues of a quasi-martial sort. To maintain the nuclear balance requires, in principle, the willingness to reckon with the possibility of nuclear war—a truly "unthinkable" matter for people devoted to the "pursuit of happiness." To keep totalitarianism in check, in an ongoing worldwide contest, similarly requires a state of mind that Americans almost instinctively shy away from—not out of cowardice but because, rightly so, they have better things to think about. Yet despite these moral handicaps, one cannot say that America has been defeated by either challenge—not yet, in any case. The forty years have passed without a single nuclear exchange. Totalitarianism has not been rolled back within the boundaries of the Soviet empire and has been instituted beyond these boundaries, but it has been precarious in those places where Soviet armed power was not immediately at hand. What is more, democracy has been maintained (and, in Greece and the Iberian peninsula, reestablished) throughout Western Europe, instituted in two theoretically most unlikely countries of prime importance outside the West (India and Japan), and currently seems to be sweeping Latin America. This is not to deny that the totalitarian threat, in its military form, continues to be very powerful indeed, but it would be premature to say that it has won the global contest.

Not surprisingly, it is in the "arts of peaceful living" that America has been most dramatically successful in these decades. The period since 1945 has seen the continuous unfolding of the economic and social miracle of democratic capitalism, both in the United States and in many countries of the world system of which the United States is the center (notably in Western Europe and Eastern Asia). If one is to speak here of a challenge, one would have to say that America has met it very successfully indeed.

The living standards of Americans have more than doubled in the generation since World War II. No matter what indicator of material well-being one looks at, from life expectancy to the availability of household machinery, the overwhelming majority of Americans live better (and longer) lives today than when Elliot Cohen wrote. Not only have the living standards of the population as a whole improved, but the chances of the individual to improve his own or his children's life through social mobility remain high. America continues to be an open society, egalitarian in its ethos (class lines have not hardened), with the opportunity for upward movement widely available. It should be said that in these characteristics, America is not much different from the other societies of advanced industrial capitalism, but it has developed them despite the great heterogeneity of its population and the complexity of a society spanning an entire continent.

During the same period American society has made gigantic political efforts to ensure that no group within it is excluded from the cornucopia of industrial capitalism. Perhaps it is necessary to go outside the country and look back on it through the eyes of other societies to grasp the scope of the revolution brought about by the civil-rights legislation of the 1960's. The entire system of legally instituted or legally tolerated racial discrimination was abolished in the span of a few years—thoroughly, with finality, and (most astonishing of all) *peacefully*. Not only was this revolution accomplished within the system, but it was only this system of democratic capitalism that could accommodate such a dramatic transformation without falling apart in the process. During the same period the American welfare state came into maturity. Like the welfare state in its European countries of origin, this has not been an unmitigated blessing. There are legitimate doubts about some of the policies and institutions created in the movement from the New Deal to the Great Society. In the United States as in the other advanced democracies, Right-of-Center and Left-of-Center parties disagree about the scope and the nature of the welfare state. This, however, should not blind us to the radically humane intention embodied in this phenomenon: that no member of the society should be excluded from the good life made possible by its enormously productive economy. If there is one challenge as yet unmet in this area, it is the challenge of constructing a specifically American version of the modern welfare state, different from the European prototype in being more pluralistic, less bureaucratized, and more amenable to private initiatives.

Finally, there is the continuing strength of a vital if at times chaotic culture. Again, America is seen more clearly from the vantage point of other societies. Whatever one may say about American culture, it is less boring than any other in the world today. To be sure, it is often vulgar, sometimes anarchic, occasionally downright pathological—but it is never dull. And this vitality of American culture, high as well as popular, has been noted throughout the world. Whatever have been the fortunes or misfortunes of American political power in the years since 1945, this has been the age in which American culture became global in its outreach. It appears to be unstoppable, even by the censors of totalitarianism. Some conservative critics of contemporary America view it as

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decadent, and there are good arguments to be made for American decadence, especially in high culture. It is worth recalling, however, that America is viewed in most of the world as the promised land of the young. And it is young people, from Manila to Managua, who read American books, dance to American music, discuss ideas made in America—and, if given the chance, move to America physically.

No achievements in history come cost-free. Every one of these American achievements in the "arts of peaceful living" has a darker underside. With higher living standards have come ever-higher expectations and, consequently, nagging frustrations among people who, in a comparative perspective, are the most fortunate on earth. Material well-being has been accompanied by decreasing productivity, which may eventually reduce the standard of living. The wide availability of opportunities has made failure, for whatever reasons, less tolerable. The language of rights has given birth to a psychology of entitlements which, if left to run its course, would make both capitalism and democracy impossible. Americans today are much more tolerant than the generation that fought World War II. At the same time, they are more prone to sudden eruptions of irrational rage. This has been the period in which one movement after another arose on waves of volcanic anger, spouting "non-negotiable demands," and vowing to realize them "by whatever means necessary." Americans today are much better educated than in Elliot Cohen's generation, yet they also appear more likely to give assent to inanities that would have been laughed out of court then. And given the state of the world today, the highest cost may be the above-mentioned fact that a society so successful in the arts of peace may lose all capacity to defend itself against violent and determined antagonists. If COMMENTARY survives to the year 2025, another symposium will be able to explore how America succeeded in surviving this built-in handicap.

PETER L. BERGER *is University Professor at Boston University and the author of, among other works,* Pyramids of Sacrifice, The Heretical Imperative, *and (with Brigitte Berger)* The War Over the Family.

Walter Berns: In his recent biography of Winston Churchill, the American William Manchester speaks of the privileges and amenities enjoyed by the not-yet-impoverished English nobility and its immediate descendants. Churchill himself, for instance, a mere grandson of a duke, was always dressed and undressed by someone else, and—whether schoolboy, soldier, public minister, or private citizen—never once in his long life had to draw his own bath. His cousin, the ninth Duke of Marlborough, was accustomed to even closer attendance. On only one occasion, apparently, was he required to travel without his valet and make do without the services the valet customarily provided; he didn't do well. An overnight visitor at the country home of friends, and like a Bertie Wooster without Jeeves, he emerged puzzled from the lavatory holding his toothbrush and complaining that it didn't "froth properly." Manchester reports that "he had to be told gently that toothpaste had to be applied to the brush before it would foam."

This story suggests that in certain respects England had apparently not changed all that much since the 1830's when Tocqueville, who knew it well, could refer to it as the country where both "enjoyment" and "power" were monopolized by the rich. Now, even in the 20th century, there was still an aristocracy that expected to be served and, much to the despair of socialists like R.H. Tawney, still a class of Englishmen willing not only to serve them but, with a tip of the cap or a tug of the forelock, ready to defer to them.

Things were different in America and always had been. Our aristocrats, our Tories, were dispatched in 1776, at the beginning, at the time we became Americans. They went back to England or fled to Canada where a few of their descendants even today congregate under the banner of United Empire Loyalists. Unlike England or Tocqueville's France, this country has never experienced or had reason to fear an attempt to restore the monarchy; there have been no American Bourbons or, more to the point, American Jacobites or "Georgians." In this respect, we were lucky; we were, as Tocqueville said, "born equal instead of becoming so."

In saying this, Tocqueville was of course ignoring the condition of black Americans. They constituted about 20 percent of the population in 1780—and about 15 percent at the time he was writing—and, as he knew very well, they could certainly not be said to have been born equal or to be living as equals. With few exceptions, they were slaves, not citizens; strictly speaking, not even Americans ("What Country have I?" asked the young Frederick Douglass in 1847). Americans became a people in 1776 with an appeal to the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God according to which all men are created equal and endowed with certain rights, chiefly the right not to be governed except with their consent. How could a slave be an American? Better, how could an American be a slave? As a group, blacks did not become Americans until they became citizens with the Fourteenth Amendment, and they could not have become citizens without having first been freed by the Thirteenth.

Unfortunately, their condition did not much improve—and in certain respects it became worse—with freedom and citizenship. Nominally,

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at least, they were now to be governed only with their consent, which the adult males among them were to give at the polls along with other voters. Any state that denied them this right to vote was to be deprived of its representation in the House of Representatives just so much, or, in the language of the Amendment, "in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such state." But blacks were not permitted to vote, not in any numbers, not after the whites regained political control in the Southern states; and, despite its new authority, Congress made no attempt to enforce this provision by imposing the sanction. Nor, when once asked, did the Supreme Court agree to order Congress to do so. America remained a racially divided, unequal society. Blacks were citizens, but in the South especially, where most of them continued to live, they were denied the privileges and immunities of citizens. In North and South alike, however, they were expected to perform the duties attending citizenship. In particular, along with other eligible persons, they were expected to fight for their country.

And fight they did, and in large numbers in World War II. But (to speak of the service I know best) they were not permitted to fight as boatswains or gunner's mates; as quartermasters, signalmen, radar technicians, engineers, and the like; such enlisted men's ratings, to say nothing of the officers' ranks, were closed to them. Along with the few Filipinos and Guamanians, black sailors were steward's mates or, less formally, "messboys." Like everyone else, they were assigned to battle stations, typically at the guns, but when not engaged in handling ammunition, they waited on officers; that was their job. Alone among native Americans, they were servants. They were not expected to prepare our toothbrushes or draw our baths—we had no bathtubs and, therefore, no baths to draw—but they made our beds, cleaned our rooms, shined our shoes, and, in the wardroom, served our meals. The unequal treatment to which they were accustomed outside did not by any means cease in the military, certainly not in the Navy. Segregated at home, they were also segregated wherever and whenever possible on each of the ships on which I served during my four years of war. Securing the rights to which they were entitled, as men and as Americans, was "the great task remaining before us." That was true when Lincoln first said it at Gettysburg and it was doubly true at the end of World War II.

The task was, of course, "great," and by 1945 it had become urgent; but it was not so difficult of accomplishment as it would have been elsewhere. Black Americans were segregated, frequently abused, deprived of their rights, but not, like the Jews of Europe, "Slaughtered like cattle, subjected to every physical indignity—*processed*." (The words are Elliot Cohen's, from the same manifesto on which this symposium is based.) A nation constituted by the Declaration of Independence and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal cannot *in good conscience* treat human beings as if they were cattle. True, on one infamous occasion we officially referred to blacks as an "inferior order of beings" who had no rights other than those "the government might choose to grant them"; but the case in which this pronouncement was made—*Dred Scott* v. *Sandford*—was a contributing cause of the Civil War and was repudiated by that war. Again, a nation that holds it to be self-evidently true that all men are equally endowed with certain unalienable rights cannot *in good conscience* deprive anyone of his rights.

THE point might be disputed, but I would argue that most Americans, and especially most American politicians, always knew—even if they were not always willing publicly to acknowledge—that slavery and its vestiges were violations of what the Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal called the American creed. Even slaveholders knew this. ("Is it not amazing," wrote Patrick Henry to a friend, "at a time when the rights of humanity are defined and understood with precision [that I should be] a Master of Slaves of my own purchase! I am drawn along by the general inconvenience of living without them, I will not, I cannot justify it.") As one might expect, Myrdal was sharply critical of the racial practices he encountered here in 1944, but by entitling his book *An American Dilemma* he paid us a compliment of sorts. For if hypocrisy is the respect paid to virtue by vice, then a dilemma is the respect paid to principle by practice or practitioners. Which is to say, and Myrdal knew this, no creed or principle, no dilemma; and the vitality of the principle that all men are created equal has made a difference in this country. It certainly made a difference in the years following World War II; it made possible a civil-rights revolution. It provided this country with the "giant's strength" required to address (and to hope to solve) the most serious of its domestic problems.

Beginning with an executive order issued in 1948 by President Harry Truman, the armed forces were in due course desegregated; by another executive order, this one issued on December 5, 1946, Truman established the President's Committee on Civil Rights which, the following year, issued its celebrated report, *To Secure These Rights*, stating the nature of the problem and delineating the elements of a program to solve it. In 1948, Hubert Humphrey fought and won the platform battle at the Democratic national convention, thereby committing that party (if not all that party's members) to the cause of securing those rights. This followed by one year Branch Rickey's decision (of perhaps equal consequence) to bring second baseman Jackie Robinson up

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from the Montreal Royals to the Brooklyn Dodgers, thereby breaking the color line in major-league baseball. In 1954, the Supreme Court handed down its famous decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* and followed this up a year later with its decree that public-school desegregation proceed "with all deliberate speed." When, in 1957, a similar federal court order was disobeyed in Little Rock, Arkansas, President Dwight D. Eisenhower responded by sending in the troops. Ten years after *Brown*, Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbidding discrimination in employment, education, public accommodations, and in federally-funded programs. The next year, 1965, saw the enactment of the Voting Rights Act, and 1968 of a law that, among other things, forbade discrimination in the sale or rental of housing, public or private.

It is not remarkable, especially after a war fighting Nazism and fascism, that these laws and legal decrees were at long last enacted or issued, or that laws and decrees alike were enforced by the executive. By securing the rights of black Americans, the country was merely fulfilling a promise made if not at the beginning then, at least, after the Civil War when the Constitution was amended.

In his 1945 manifesto, Elliot Cohen called upon us to "reaffirm and restore the sense of sanctity of the human person and the rights of man"; only by doing this, he said, could we meet the great challenges bequeathed us by the war. Here, as I suggested, we Americans had an advantage over other peoples; we had only to repudiate some of our practices, not our principles. Contrast this with the Germans who would have to repudiate the greatest of their poets, Goethe. Goethe was the least provincial of Germans—in fact, as Leo Strauss pointed out, he was "the greatest among the cosmopolitan Germans"—yet he could write a novel in which his Wilhelm Meister builds a new society from which Jews are explicitly excluded. "We do not tolerate any Jew among us," explains Goethe's hero, "for how could we grant him a share in the highest culture, the origin and traditions of which he denies?"

Or contrast our situation with that of the Soviets. To affirm a sense of the sanctity of the human person and the rights of man, they would have to repudiate Karl Marx who was contemptuous of the very idea of the rights of man. He repeatedly referred to them as "the so-called rights of man," a statement made more ominous because it appears in his essay, "On the Jewish Question." Not only had we Americans never been divided into aristocrat and peasant, or bourgeoisie and proletariat, but we were constituted a people by solemnly dedicating ourselves to the proposition that all men are created equal: not equally strong, intelligent, handsome, or beautiful; not equally white or Anglo-Saxon; not equally Protestant or even Christian; but equally human —and in the thought that inspired and guided the authors of the Declaration of Independence, the essence of being human, or the quality that defines a human and political being, is the possession of rights. We Americans did not have to introduce or even restore a "sense of the sanctity of the human person and the rights of man"; we had only to reaffirm what we had been saying since our beginning as a people. Unfortunately, the egalitarians of our day are not satisfied with an equality of rights; they want an equality of station.

At about the time his cousin the Duke of Marlborough was learning about the properties of toothbrushes, Winston Churchill was addressing an audience at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester and predicting that the future would be "more equal" but—and here a note of regret crept into his analysis—more simple as well. It would be, he said, "a wider if a simpler culture." Presumably, something desirable would be lacking in it, or would have to be sacrificed in the course of building it. Not merely the valets who prepare the toothbrushes or draw the baths; that, surely, was not what Churchill had in mind or would regret having to forgo. Not the amenities of aristocracy, although he surely enjoyed them; not its privileges as such; not, in itself, its most characteristic privilege, the leisure it makes possible for a few; what he feared was the loss of a culture made possible by that leisure. What we have to fear is not the loss of an aristocratic culture, but, under pressure from today's egalitarians, the loss of respect for those quasi-arisocratic forms that make constitutional democracy possible.

By forms, I mean what Tocqueville meant when he declared them to be essential to democracies: formal procedures or arrangements for the doing of something—for example, the selecting of lawmakers or the passing of a law. The Constitution is itself a compendium of forms, and, appropriately enough, it was both written and adopted in a very formal manner. Forms are not efficient; they are inhibiting, frequently delaying and sometimes preventing achievement of the end desired. They can be annoying, especially to the "committed" politician who has his eye fixed on that end and, to reach it, is inclined to take shortcuts. At a minimum he finds forms to be inconvenient. But this is precisely why Tocqueville found them so useful in democratic times. "It is this inconvenience," he wrote, "which men of democracies find in forms, that makes them so useful to liberty, their principal merit being to serve as a barrier between the strong and the weak, the government and the governed." A merit system, for example, stands between the civil servant and the Andrew Jacksons with their principle, "to the victor belongs the spoils." Election laws embodied in a constitution, for a time at least, stand between Joshua Nkomo (and what remains of his follow-

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ers) and the Zimbabwe government headed by Robert Mugabe. The elements of due process have protected many an indigent black defendant from zealous (and especially Southern) prosecutors. Government limited in these various ways is what is meant by constitutionalism.

We Americans are about to celebrate the Constitution's bicentennial, and for this reason especially one might think that what Tocqueville said about democratic men in general—that they feel an "instinctive contempt" for forms—could not rightly be said of American democrats in particular. Unfortunately, in our zeal to extend civil rights, we have proved to be as contemptuous of formal restrictions as any other nation. We, too, have had our eye fixed on the result only. A right to vote becomes an entitlement to a certain proportion of representatives when merely guaranteeing the right fails to produce that result. An equal-employment-opportunity right becomes an entitlement to a job when merely guaranteeing the right fails to produce the quota of jobs. The right to take a civil-service examination becomes a right to pass the examination and, thereby, an entitlement to a civil-service job.

To achieve these results, and always in the name of civil rights, statutes have been deliberately misread or unenforced by the federal courts,* the constitutional rights of others ignored or abridged,† merit rules discarded by court order, and a variety of so-called affirmative-action programs—goals, timetables, quotas—imposed in the private and public sectors alike, programs that, almost without exception, originated not in statutes but in executive (or lesser administrators') orders. (How many of those subject to them have heard of the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures, or could come within a country mile of describing them and where they came from?) And when it was discovered—thanks to a leak to the Washington *Post*—that the Reagan administration was considering abolishing these programs, the outcry (from members of Congress, the national press, as well as from the civil-rights organizations) was sufficient to cause the White House to beat a hasty retreat. Constitutionalism is not held in high regard today, not in the nation's capital at least. There the Constitution is praised not for its formal structure but for its infinite flexibility, a flexibility that allows it to be adapted to the purposes of today's majority—and, we would do well to remember, also tomorrow's.

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* See my article, "Let Me Call You Quota, Sweetheart," COMMENTARY, May 1981.

† See my article, "Voting Rights and Wrongs," COMMENTARY, March 1982.

Midge Decter: Looking back on 1945 from here, one reminds oneself with astonishment that many, many very intelligent people in those days took it quite for granted that we were facing an imminent depression. True, the system had performed miracles in wartime, but that was just the point, said these people: it was the mobilization for war that had saved the economy; peacetime would find it riven once more by its internal capitalist contradictions. Some indeed have never given up this expectation, though they have learned to disguise it, perhaps even from themselves, with a number of clever and innovative "theories." Each time the economy dips or slows down or responds badly to some abuse imposed upon it by a greedy and ungrateful polity, they rush to the fore, declaring triumphantly, "We told you so. *This* time the system is really going under!"

To answer the question of how well the "giant's strength" has been applied to the "arts of peaceful living," it is instructive—as it is for so many of the issues that seem to puzzle us—to remember the 50's. The children born during those years, of course, know nothing about them. For they were a generation raised and educated precisely to believe that the earth was created at the moment of their appearance on it. Thus the 50's have been entered in the annals of history as an age of gross materialism, an age, in the terminology of the period's most hastily anxious critic, David Riesman, of "abundance." In what did this famous and, in the view of Mr. Riesman and his epigones, spiritually threatening abundance consist? In the widespread acquisition, especially by the country's returning veterans, of educations, jobs, cars, and houses. In these houses were such enervatingly corrupting luxuries as washing machines, refrigerators with food-freezing compartments, and, inevitably, television sets. The 50's also brought a vast new system of great highways, and with them among other things even more cars, which made possible the unbelievable luxury of being able to live in some newly-minted "community" a considerable distance away from one's place of work.

In short, the material "abundance" of the 50's was for the 60's a barely adequate starting point. And so it has gone, upward and ever upward without let-up, to the present.

Are there people who have been permitted to enjoy a great deal more of all this abundance than others? Of course there are. On the other hand, are there people who have had no share in it at all? The answer is a resounding no. We are positively randy for suffering and deprivation—we have set them to music and sing them daily—but go into the home of the most put-upon and feckless welfare mother in the worst of slums and compare her standard of living with that of her grandmother. Why then do we hear so endlessly from so many people of the terrible failure, or

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imminent failure, of the system? Because the "giant's strength" that inheres in this peculiarly productive political economy has cost us something to sustain. It does not come for free. It is, for one thing, psychically hard, particularly on those who cannot for one reason or another keep up. It is also spiritually hard, requiring the sacrifice of certain of our inner comforts. And it is—no doubt about it—anxiety-making, having confronted us all so suddenly with conditions, albeit benign ones, for which we were not prepared. Perhaps in our postwar juvenescence we had simply failed to reckon on the cost. Whatever the reason, we have not only mastered the "arts of peaceful living," we have carried them to the point where it sometimes seems that we are about to be overwhelmed by them.

As FOR the challenge of nuclear weapons, here, too, we have accepted the comfort and caviled at the cost. The challenge of these weapons, after all, was how to put them at the service of averting another world war. This they have so far done. But managing this challenge must be a continuous, who knows, perhaps even an eternal, process. And such a process we have not in these forty years even faintly begun to resign ourselves to. Instead we have wasted our time in a grand and utterly bootless debate about whether nuclear weapons should exist at all, or about how to "outlaw" them, or about how to reach, with a sworn and implacable enemy, some sort of treaty to do away with them. Whereas wisdom would dictate the recognition that they *do* exist—and will not, moreover, for all the treaties in the world, go away. Nor can they be outlawed: to criminals—and we do happen to live in a world where the number of criminal nations is not small—the law means nothing. That is why they are criminals. With them, only *force majeure* counts for anything. Wisdom would also by now dictate the recognition that treaties are mere redundancies: where there is genuine agreement, they are merely ritual confirmations, and where there is no genuine agreement, they are not worth the paper, etc. We profess outrage that the Soviets have violated agreements with us. Why should we be outraged? These "agreements" were not based on real agreement, only on momentary political expediency, and we had every reason to understand that. We are outraged at the Soviets, then, for dashing hopes we were not entitled to entertain in the first place.

For forty years we have sought, because they have interfered with other more pleasant pursuits, to evade the real alternatives presented to us by nuclear weapons. Which are, that we must either have so many more of them than the rest of the world that no one dare dream of challenging us, or that the weapons we have, including defensive ones, must be so vastly superior that no one dare dream of challenging us. Or we can surrender. In a struggle between two parties where each side wishes to prevail, the idea of "parity"—at any level of force, high, low, or in-between—is a chimera. In other words, nuclear weapons may be unimaginably, even fatally, destructive, but no more than the longbow or the M-1 rifle do they exist in a vacuum. As weapons, they are, and remain, instruments of politics. And politics, as Mr. Dooley said, "ain't beanbag."

To be sure, we can, as I said, surrender. Surrender is in fact the unadmitted prescription of many of the critics of our strategic posture. But since these critics cannot justify, even to themselves, the voluntary collapse of the richest and most powerful country on earth for no other reason than that it has a brutal and determined, though seriously impoverished, enemy, they surround the real implications of their position with the fog of their good intentions.

IF WEAPONS, even nuclear weapons, are no more than the instruments of politics, what shall we say of the politics themselves? Here our evasions have been positively staggering. The United States approached the end of World War II with the view that there were two major threats in the world. There was Nazism (or, to make the statement more inclusive, fascism) and there was, believe it or not, European imperialism. The first of these threats was about to be destroyed; thus it was to the second that we would now be able to turn our attention. Hard to remember, isn't it, that when Harry Truman ascended to the Presidency, he believed that the outstanding danger to that great new world order promised by and embodied in the United Nations was . . . the British empire!

One might smile indulgently at such innocence. The accusation of innocence is one that Americans have always been somewhat smugly willing to take upon themselves. The problem is that it was not innocence at all, but something else, and among other things it cost the freedom and sovereignty of Central and Eastern Europe. In the September COMMENTARY one reads John Colville's account of Roosevelt at Yalta, winking at Stalin and patronizing—there is no other word for it—Churchill, and even at this late date one feels the gripping fear of the audience at a melodrama when it knows who the villain is but the hero doesn't. No, it was not innocence that doomed half of Europe at Yalta, nor was it simply ignorance. It was a rare and seemingly incurable political disease, a disease whose major symptom is that it blinds the sufferer to the presence before him of two stark alternatives. It impels him to believe that he can always find some other way, some third way, out. Sitting at a table with Churchill on one side and Stalin on the other, Roosevelt chose the United Nations. This has been a model for American policy vis-à-vis the Soviets ever since.

This judgment against U.S. policy is a harsh one

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I know. There was, after only a few short years, the Truman Doctrine, which saved Greece and Turkey from the fate of Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, *et al.* There was the Marshall Plan; what other power but the United States would have undertaken it? There was the successful conversion of our former enemies, Germany (or half of it) and Japan, into prosperous democracies; what other power but the United States can even be imagined undertaking it? There was Point Four, which, whatever else can be said about it, probably did help to cushion the otherwise dangerous trauma of the rapid dissolution of the European empires. Moreover, American policy vis-à-vis Communism has not been uniform. We have spent blood and treasure trying to contain Communist power. We have tried, to state the matter in rather caricatured form, to corrupt it with détente. We have also tried, sporadically, half-heartedly, and ineffectively, but tried nevertheless, to undermine it.

What we have not done, however, is face up to the fact that Communism is an either/or proposition. Which is to say, that Communism is in its nature a revolutionary principle. Which is to say further that in the long run, either Communism in some variant or Western-style democracy in some variant must prevail. It is a case of "them or us." The Soviets see the world this way; it is the source of their renowned patience. They have a policy—they seek to do us in—which is why they can advance, retreat, get tough, act friendly, shift alliances, or whatever else seems to serve their ultimate ends at any particular moment. They are certainly not, as the saying goes, ten feet tall, nor are they gifted with some special political genius. On the contrary. But they are clear about what they are after. And they are not afraid to confront alternatives.

In this sense of the term, we do not have a policy and never have had. We have always pretended to ourselves that there is a third way—some complex tangle of deals and arrangements and settlements—between our seeing eventually to the Soviets' disappearance or their seeing to ours. Faced with a clear Soviet threat, in Central America, in the Middle East, in Southern Africa, we can be counted on to become a debating society, occupied with discussions about the root causes of social unrest in those troublesome places. We treat ourselves not as a party to the conflict, though it happens to be aimed directly at us, but rather as its mediator. We mediate, in other words, between ourselves and those out to destroy us.

I do not say that this is a wholly unattractive trait. Bone and sinew of pluralistic democracy is the idea that varying interests can and must be mediated. This idea has done more than offer us a splendid country to live in; it has created a kind of political miracle in human history. The world, however, much as we would like it to be, and much as we once kidded ourselves into thinking it could be when we placed our hopes in an institution like the United Nations, is not a pluralistic democracy. The world is in fact a place where what little pluralistic democracy there is will be snuffed out if the citizens privileged to enjoy it are not prepared gratefully to begin making a few hard and clear choices.

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Joseph Epstein: The other day, over the telephone, a good friend, describing a third party, an intellectual figure of some prominence, remarked, "Of course, he's a rabid anti-Communist." There followed the briefest of pauses. "Wait a minute," my friend said, "so am I." Although not very keen on that word "rabid," with its root in the word rabies, I have to confess that so, too, am I if not a rabid then at least a strong anti-Communist. I bring this up at the outset not only because I believe that Communism continues to pose the primary political problem of our age but because I feel that one's views on Communism cannot but strongly influence one's response to the three challenges set out forty years ago by the founding editor of COMMENTARY.

As a strong anti-Communist, my condemnation of Communism is of a blanket kind. Whatever good may be credited to Communism, I believe it has been attained at an outrageously—at a morally shocking—high price. Wherever Communism has been victorious, it has smothered freedom and brought destruction and death; it has caused life to be flattened and seem less rich, while dampening the human spirit and muffling it nearly to the point of suffocation. (For this reason, chief among the heroes of our age have been those writers with the bad luck to have been born in countries where Communism has been dominant but who have had the courage to speak out against it.) Lest I seem too sweeping and simple-minded in my condemnation, let me say that I have read the old debates about Communist polycentrism; I know about the hopes that individual Communist regimes will in time loosen their grip and cease to treat their own populations as conquered peoples, and I partly share in these hopes; I have heard the arguments—made by Marshall Shulman and Ronald Steel, among others—that the foreign policy of the Soviet Union is based on its own towering sense of insecurity. But I take all this with a shaker of salt and tankard of tarragon. I continue to believe that Communism, represented principally by the Soviet Union, wishes us—the West generally but the United States in particular—no good. These beliefs—these commonplaces, if

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you prefer—are what lie behind my anti-Communism.

As I have said, these beliefs inevitably color my responses to Elliot Cohen's challenges. Take his second challenge first: "the 'ultimate challenge' of nuclear weapons." I feel a certain effrontery in discussing this at all, since my technical knowledge of weaponry is highly limited, to put it very gently indeed, and I rather suspect that without technical knowledge in this line one doesn't quite begin to qualify even as a *schmoozer*. Still, pressed to give a one-sentence answer, I should say that we have handled the challenge of nuclear weapons wastefully, ineptly, and probably as well as we could. So long as the Soviet Union, with its aggressive foreign policy, has nuclear weapons, so must we have them; I take that as axiomatic. What is more, as soon as the Soviet Union acquired nuclear weapons, we were at a disadvantage. It could allocate what sums it wished for its weapons without the messy inconvenience of having to consult its citizens about their own priorities. The United States, rightly if inconveniently, has perennially had to struggle to gain its defense allocations and no doubt always will. In the matter of defense, this has put us permanently on the defensive. In the arms race with the Soviet Union we have been saddled with the penalty of having to play not to win but for something roughly the equivalent of a tie. As anyone with athletic experience knows, it's no easy thing to achieve a tie: you waste a lot of energy, you look inept at times, you do the best you can.

A MONTH or so ago at a farmer's market, an older woman, numinous with a sense of her own virtue, asked me to sign a petition to make our town, Evanston, Illinois, a nuclear-free zone. "Sorry, Madam," I said, eschewing her pencil, "but apart from the fact that, insofar as I know, we have no nuclear weapons in Evanston, there is a thing or two that I like about nuclear weapons." She wasn't much interested in my explanation, so I shall provide it here. The first thing to be said in favor of nuclear weapons is that, in an odd but not altogether inexplicable way, they provide their own kind of inherent deterrence. It has now been forty years between world wars, forty years since Hiroshima, which is double the length of time between the first and second world wars, and there can be little doubt that this is partly owing to the fear, on all sides, of the next such war being a nuclear war. Long may this fear continue to reign.

Second, I have been impressed by the argument put forth in these pages by Edward N. Luttwak* to the effect that, if the United States and the Soviet Union were now to dismantle all their respective nuclear weapons, the United States would be at a serious military disadvantage, for the Soviet Union's current superiority in conventional weapons would put it at an immense strategic advantage. The logic of Luttwak's argument, which is bolstered by statistics on conventional weaponry, is crushing to the anti- and the de-militarist alike. It runs something like this: if you really want to get rid of nuclear weapons, very well; even assuming you can achieve nuclear disarmament, you must then be prepared to build up conventional forces, which would mean reinstating conscription and perhaps greater expense than it now costs to maintain our nuclear arsenal. Of course, if you don't take the threat of the Soviet Union seriously, you don't have a problem. But if you do, and if you believe moreover that your countrymen wish neither conscription nor the expense of catching up with the Soviet Union's substantial lead in conventional weapons, then you are less likely to take the easy-virtue line against all nuclear weapons. So there you have it: how I learned to keep worrying but not altogether hate the bomb.

AS FOR Elliot Cohen's first challenge—has the "giant's strength" of the United States been adequately applied to the "arts of peaceful living"?—it of course requires a highly mixed response. In so many ways the quality of daily life seems to have been greatly improved in this country, though most of these improvements have been brought about by technology. I am thinking here of such obvious items as air-conditioning, air travel, medical services, and much more. I think it unarguable that opportunities for minority groups, Jews among them, have grown greater. The Southern part of the United States has risen and shaken off its medieval torpor and, if you happen to have been black, cruelty. One could add a good many other items. In this respect, I cannot join R. H. Tawney, who once said that the only progress he could reckon in his lifetime was in the deportment of dogs.

Still, one step forward, one step back. One serious bit of regress that cannot be missed is the increase since World War II in street crime, which has had a depressing effect on life in large cities, making paranoia there usually the better part of valor. As someone who considers himself a racial integrationist, I see serious regress here, too. Especially do I see this among the young. Apparently it is a subject upon which no one wishes to remark, but at my own and at every other university I have visited, social segregation among the races is the norm. Encouraged, my guess is, by consciousness-raising courses, black students have by their own volition chosen to segregate themselves. After the courageous efforts of the civil-rights movement in the South in the early 1960's, this seems to me not only mistaken but heartbreaking. To these examples of regress, one can add the category of problems not yet solved: poverty, illiteracy, illegitimacy, and more. Utopia is a long way from arrival in the United States.

* "How to Think About Nuclear War," August 1982.

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Elsewhere progress and regress in the arts of peaceful living are not so easily measured. More people than ever before now attend institutions of higher learning in the United States, for example, yet nearly everyone interested in intellectual life senses a slippage in the quality of education dispensed in these institutions. Museum attendance has risen dramatically, so has concert attendance, and the dance has come into its own as an American art. Yet in the arts, exhibition and performance seem vastly to have outstripped creation. The avant-garde tradition, for the present at least, seems moribund. Literature in the United States seems much the poorer for having been largely taken over by the university. At the end of World War II Americans, I think it accurate to say, still felt themselves existing in a state of cultural inferiority vis-à-vis Europe; we do so no longer. In culture as in so many other areas of life, we appear to provide the best the world has to offer—and yet it does not, somehow, seem good enough. Another founding editor, Henry Luce of *Time*, prophesied that this was to be the American Century. It probably has been; it will probably be viewed as such by historians of the future. But we Americans don't appear to be enjoying it much. Why?

Chiefly for two reasons, I believe. The first is that many of us sense—rightly, in my view—that democracy, liberty, and freedom are on the run in the contemporary world. Fewer and fewer portions of the globe are hospitable to them: in Communist countries they are anathema; in most of the Third World countries not under Marxist governments they are at best considered beside the point. Despite the break-up of the vast European colonial empires since the end of World War II, democracy has not spread and does not figure to do so soon. If one lives in a democracy, if one values its rewards, looking about the world today one has to be optimistic indeed not to feel that the barbarian is at the gates. This feeling has removed a good deal of the luster from Luce's American Century.

The second reason that we don't seem to be enjoying the American Century is that there are a great many Americans who feel we have no right to enjoy it. John Dos Passos once declared that the United States was really two nations, by which he meant the rich and the poor. I think we are two nations once again, or at least two cultures within a single nation: one is what I think of as the nation's workaday culture, which stretches across all class lines, and the other as the intellectual culture, which mostly resides in the universities and what is somewhat vaguely termed "communications." It is the people from the workaday culture who twice elected Ronald Reagan President; it is for the most part the people from the intellectual culture who consider his election an outrage and a moral disgrace. I mentioned earlier that those who revere democracy sense the barbarian at the gates; with the election of Ronald Reagan, those who take their ideas and beliefs from the intellectual culture feel that the barbarians are already loose in the city. The major ideas of the intellectual culture remain left-wing ideas, its spirit remains overwhelmingly liberal.

I HAPPEN to spend a goodly portion of my life in the main bastion of intellectual culture, the university, and it sometimes seems to me quite bizarre the extent to which left-wing ideas, put to rout in electoral politics for the moment, remain entrenched in the university. For example, Marxism, a doctrine discredited among economists around the world and one that has brought more misery to mankind than perhaps any other modern body of ideas, is very much a going concern in American universities. Marxist literary critics, Marxist historians and art historians, Marxist philosophers are all quite fashionable just now. In the university, obeisance must be shown to feminism, which is very different from showing regard and respect for women. An act of real political courage in the university is that of the rare head of an academic department who is willing to use the masculine suffix with his title, as in "chairman" (my pen trembles as it writes out the word). No one would ever dream of suggesting that much of the content of many black-studies programs is devoted to consciousness-raising, which in this context means teaching black students about how brutally they are exploited, like their ancestors before them, by an essentially racist American society. Despite all the talk and media pieces about the increasing conservatism of today's university students, I find that many of the best students keenly feel the set of emotions I have come to think of as "60's envy"; these students feel their lives are empty, insignificant, worthless if they aren't out on the barricades, making social statements of one kind or another. I think we shall see a good deal of this 60's envy put into 80's energy this current academic year in South African divestiture protests on campuses across the country.

We have, then, this odd phenomenon, a country that seems to be increasingly conservative and a culture that remains for the most part solidly Left-liberal. Tension between a country and its intellectual culture need not necessarily be a bad thing; often it has been useful, and the culture has led the country. Today, though, one feels that the culture is trailing the country. Marxist academic intellectuals, for example, rattling away about their dead doctrine, seem in a position akin to that of Galileo's returning to life to put forth the doctrine that the earth is flat, when everyone else now knows better. If you were to put Elliot Cohen's third challenge—how successfully have we met the dangerous threat of totalitarianism?—to most members of the intellectual culture, I don't think they would know what the hell you

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were talking about. Totalitarianism for them is Caspar Weinberger, Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan. Which says a good deal, I think, about how successfully we are meeting the dangerous threat of totalitarianism.

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Suzanne Garment: COMMENTARY's fortieth-anniversary symposium, said the letter from its current editor, would take its theme from the "remarkably prescient introductory manifesto" written for the magazine's maiden issue in 1945 by its founding editor Elliot Cohen. But when we read phrases from the manifesto today, some of them do not seem so prescient. Instead they sound unfamiliar, and remind us not of how much Elliot Cohen foresaw but of how different our political discourse is from the talk that marked his time.

Elliot Cohen found the nation "troubled and hesitant" on the morning after its triumphant victory in World War II. Americans saw themselves as facing hard challenges. For one thing, they wondered whether the "giant's strength, in production, in cooperation, in planning, in courage" could be "mustered as greatly and as wisely for the arts of peaceful living" as it had been in wartime. Forty years later the question seems innocent.

In some ways, of course, the giant is exercising his muscles as well as he ever did. Lately he has not pulled off anything so flashy as a full-scale war mobilization; thank God he hasn't had to. The country continues to prosper amazingly, as measured on any worldwide or historic scale.

Sustained prosperity has brought problems of its own. Where we have been able to spread our economic habits to other countries, we have created new competitors for ourselves. At home, parts of the culture have grown alarmingly worse at transmitting the qualities of willingness to work and devotion to family. The spirit of self-sacrifice that animated the best of the country's effort during World War II does not exactly light up the national sky today. In these senses the giant's strength has not kept on being "mustered." But anyone who expected us to be immune from such changes was simply not thinking realistically about modern democracies and their citizens.

In fact, some of the problems that consume inordinately large amounts of our political energy today stem from the fact that the giant has been mustered a bit too often and too enthusiastically for the arts of peaceful living. World War II showed observers the great reservoirs of idealism that sit just below the American surface. Many of the same observers chafed at how little our political leaders called on this idealism in the decade after the war. By the mid-1950's this desire to do larger and better things with American politics had found a wholly admirable outlet in the civil-rights movement, and the movement's successes gave further encouragement to the idealists.

In fact, for the past couple of decades the giant has hardly been able to get a full night's sleep without being mustered by somebody for the sake of some art of peaceful living or another. After the civil-rights movement came the movement for greater minority economic well-being through affirmative action. The minority-affirmative-action movement gave birth to a similar movement on behalf of women. The environmental movement began to flex its young muscles. So did the consumer movement and the health-and-safety movement. Each of these sprouted a series of more specific offshoots: the women's movement bred a movement among divorced fathers to gain custody of their children; the environmentalists developed specialists in the problems of toxic wastes.

In the long, long run, people will quite probably judge that we were on balance enriched by these campaigns—not because they were balanced efforts, and not because they had due regard for the costs they were imposing on society, but because our country's politics have proved capable of correcting for a good many of the distortions in these movements' assumptions.

IT IS still not clear just how the most recent swing of our political pendulum occurred. Surely this pendulum got one shove from the sight of the anti-Vietnam demonstrators in the streets of Chicago in 1968. Some watched the protesters battling the Chicago police and learned that the U.S. system was essentially brutal. More people, it is safe to say, looked at the demonstrators' unbounded rage against America and came to the opposite political conclusion.

A similar push came from the issue of drugs, and a larger push still from the crime problem. Affirmative action, health and safety regulation, and assaults on the U.S. from new quarters in the Third World triggered more of the same reaction.

Historian Donald Fleming used to explain that the frequently invoked phrase "law and order" does not really describe the sort of society that Americans want. Before the Civil War our writers approvingly portrayed the Western frontier as a quintessentially American place of "lawlessness and order": even though central authority and formal law-enforcement mechanisms were weak, citizens proved capable of banding together on their own to control the violence endemic to a developing land. By contrast, the South became a dark symbol of "law and disorder": the formal

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mechanisms of justice were in place, but they operated to maintain a racial system that was violent in its essence and in day-to-day fact.

During the culture wars of the past twenty years, more and more people in this country obviously developed the sense that they were suffering from too much of somebody else's idea of law and not enough of their own notion of order.

We have had a reaction in the obvious political sense and in broader senses as well. The Right has risen but, just as important, ideas among the political Left have also changed. One should not overdraw the shifts, especially since some of them have just started to take place. But consider the American liberal agenda of twenty years ago: arms control; the elimination of poverty; an expansion of civil rights; and—then just beginning—the restraints of capitalism through environmental, health, and safety regulation.

Today, environmentalism has become a mainstream concern. It has been modified along the way, though: nowadays you can hardly join the debate unless you swear that you do not mean to fling a monkey wrench into the engine of economic growth. The health and safety fields have seen a similar drawing in of the rhetorical horns.

The fight against poverty has thrown cartsful of baggage overboard and has been streamlined into a concern with hunger. The broad hints of political and economic redistributionism are gone. Recently some liberals tried to launch a movement for a "new industrial policy," but it soon became clear that the new policy was going to entail a lot of central economic planning. This idea is anathema not only to the Right but to the "newer" segments of the Left itself, and the campaign has faltered.

The intense concern of the Left for arms control persists, but even here there has been an interesting change. Liberals are now talking about human rights a great deal more than they did, say, a decade ago. This human-rights talk is often opportunistic, of course, as it is for all sides of our political debates. But on balance, adopting the rhetoric of rights has made the traditional arms-control advocates a bit more reluctant to portray this country's adversaries as nations essentially the same as we are.

In sum, the giant not only thinks he has been somewhat overmustered but is no longer ashamed to say so. Left and Right show an increasing sense that markets, families, and other devices that exploit the behavior of the American creature we know, instead of one yet to be formed, give us a better chance at peaceful living than does constant mobilization in the transcendent spirit of a real or metaphorical war.

COMMENTARY's 1945 introductory statement asked not only how well we could marshal our postwar energies but how we would face the "ultimate challenge" of the atomic bomb. This phrase, too, now sounds just a little strange. The bomb is of course "ultimate" in the amount of damage it can do all at once to the human race, and perhaps "ultimate" as well among large political issues in the degree to which it affects ordinary Americans' sense of well-being. If the bomb goes off tomorrow, this would be what you would call a fairly ultimate event.

But just as striking, in light of the potential destructiveness of nuclear weapons and of the absence of satisfactory formal control mechanisms, is that so far we have not blown ourselves up. In fact, an American foreign-policy maker can go for days sometimes without finding nuclear Armageddon at the head of his crisis list. Often it will have been edged out of first place by some local political crisis involving plain old conventional weapons or by the prospect of newer horrors like biological warfare and terrorism.

Our escape to date from incineration is not the fruit of international cooperation and law-abidingness but the beautiful child of the ugly witch "deterrence." It is becoming equally clear that if we want to build a more secure foundation for nuclear peace, we have to have not more treaties but more of the traditional Western virtue of technological self-reliance. The phrase "ultimate challenge" when applied to the bomb is like the phrase "mustering the giant's strength" applied to domestic policy: it suggests that triumph will come through an extraordinary exercise of political will. Instead, the nuclear crisis has proven to be much like other crises: it has been succeeded in our nightmares by ever newer problems, and it will be mitigated not by revolutionary achievements in human cooperation but by ordinary, marvelous practical products of self-interested human inventiveness.

The debate over these arms-control propositions is, to say the least, still heated. But now it is a debate with two substantial sides. This, too, shows a huge change in the political climate.

UNLIKE the giant and the bomb, Elliot Cohen's third worry, about totalitarianism, does not seem the slightest bit anachronistic. Totalitarianism was "the kind of thinking and feeling," he put it, that permits and justifies the "colossal latter-day massacre of innocents" and that "can wreak destruction comparable to the atomic bomb itself." These concepts may be even more vivid to us today than they were in the year Elliot Cohen wrote his words.

True, in 1945 the world had just seen Nazism. As World War II ended, however, it was possible to think that this sort of barbarism was precisely what the Allied victory had brought to an end. It was possible to look at the repressive Soviet regime and judge that it, too, would melt in the sunlight of postwar prosperity and international order.

The American Right emerged from the war pre-

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occupied with what it called the Soviets' godless Communism. For years other people viewed this preoccupation not as a genuine concern about totalitarianism but as a mask for an unreasoning hatred by the Right of secularism and of political and economic egalitarianism.

Events of the past forty years have seen to it that few American political actors take such positions today. This is not to say that this country has been fighting Soviet totalitarianism with a unity of national will; on the contrary, in this one area where the giant could use a little mustering, we have instead seen persistent self-deception and denial. Still, there have been changes. The Soviet system and its objectionable practices have persisted too long to support the optimistic postwar theories. More particularly, the past decade has given us Cambodia and Afghanistan: such events make it hard to mount a public denial of Soviet voraciousness or of the reality and monstrousness of totalitarianism.

Our political culture is inventive: people who wish to do so can find the most ingenious reasons for blocking U.S. aid to a place like El Salvador. But nowadays even politicians eager for new arms-control treaties restrain themselves when saying hopeful things about the Soviets. You won't find many public figures willing to deny how poorly the Soviets have kept their arms-control promises to us in the past; this time around the arms-control advocates are putting their rhetorical chips on the idea that the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, is different from the men who preceded him. The advocates are going to have a somewhat harder job this time selling the idea of the bomb as the new "ultimate challenge"; we have had a new look at totalitarianism recently, and the bomb may well have to move over and share its place of preeminence.

In the same way, it is no accident that our political rhetoric pays increasing tribute these days to ideas of freedom and less attention to ideas of economic egalitarianism or redistribution. Even the idea of the market economy, ever problematic for modern democracies, is gaining in public respectability. Political actors here are on the whole more aware than they were a decade or two ago that totalitarianism is no mere paranoid fantasy but does indeed lie in wait out there in the dark, devouring innocents. Under this circumstance it is hard to treat as condescendingly as we once did the old-fashioned individualism of American society.

If the American giant had as much strength as he made available for mustering in World War II, it was probably because he had been left alone to develop it in the years preceding. Just after the war leaving him alone to the same extent may not have seemed necessary to his continued strength. But it seems so to us today, after forty years of living in the shadow of modern states that leave so little room for breath and exercise on the part of individual souls.

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Nathan Glazer: Whether or not *we*—that is, the Americans, our government and our society—bear any responsibility for them, some things, I would argue, have turned out better than we expected in the forty years since Commentary was founded. This, I find, is my first reaction to the serious questions set. Of course some things have turned out worse. But I will come to that later.

What turned out better? Elliot Cohen referred to our "giant's strength in production," and production came first. But the other side of that giant's strength in production was Europe and Japan in ruins, dependent on the United States for food, for assistance of every type. What kind of world could we expect when half or more of the world's goods were produced in a country with, as it then was, 6 or 7 percent of the world's population? How could Europe and Japan recover from the incredible destruction of war, which had left most of their cities in ruins, and had killed so many of their best young people? We fear now our economic decline; we feared then a predominance so great that it would turn us into imperialists and dominators strong enough almost to guarantee a soul-threatening arrogance. And there was indeed enough of that in any case, when combined with our deeply held beliefs in a distinctive American spiritual and political mission in the world.

These were potentially the most serious consequences of our giant's strength: hubris, and disdain and disrespect for other societies, other cultures. Well, we were certainly saved from that. Europe recovered, Japan recovered, with a vengeance. The American share of world production is now down to 20 percent or so—but no American would argue that we are economically worse off than we were forty years ago. While some of our sense of well-being is given by comparison with other countries, and even more by our sense of our economic position in the world, more is given by comparisons with our own past. All is not well there, particularly when young people today compare the houses they can afford with those their parents bought when they entered the housing market twenty or thirty years ago. But on the whole the judgment must be that we have prospered, even while Europe and Japan and East Asia have prospered considerably more. (The Third World is another story—but we weren't thinking about it forty years ago.)

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The world of capitalist democracy has its problems today, but it is infinitely more prosperous and provides a much better life for the average person than it did in 1945, or than it expected to do once it recovered from the destruction of war. One reason it expected to do poorly was that we all feared the return of depression and mass unemployment. The depression had only been overcome by preparation for war, and by war itself. What reason did we have not to expect its return? Yet the depression never returned, in the United States, or in Europe, or in Japan. It is not simply a matter of words: even 10-percent unemployment, year after year, as in some European countries, doesn't match the despair of the depression. Just why, it is not easy to say. Certainly one reason is that we have in all Western countries programs of unemployment insurance and other social programs that do much more for the unemployed than we did in the depression. These programs themselves contribute of course to higher unemployment, longer search times for jobs, greater willingness to delay taking jobs. But just why high rates of unemployment that would have been considered insupportable in the 60's are tolerated now, without drastic consequences for governments in power, is not clear to me. In any case, there has not been a return of depression either on the scale or with the political consequences of the 30's (Father Coughlin and assorted demagogues here, Hitler in Germany).

And there is yet a third fear, still unrealized, but greater, it is true, than ever before: nuclear war. To say that we have avoided nuclear war for forty years may be only to congratulate ourselves just before going over the precipice. The presence of 50,000 bombs, in forms ever more varied and suited to different styles of delivery, and some a thousand times more powerful than that of Hiroshima, is a daily nightmare. Are the systems that control their release secure against madness (or actual design by individuals who want to act independently of the central power)? What do we do when less responsible powers acquire bombs? Is there any way of escaping from a steady expansion and refinement of nuclear weapons? Men live as if they will not die and nations and societies go on as if they cannot be horribly destroyed in an instant by a few bombs. We struggle over the control and reduction of nuclear weapons, and aside from the banning of tests in the atmosphere more than twenty years ago, we have little to show for these efforts. And yet, who could with any confidence in 1945 have looked ahead forty years and said that no other bombs would be exploded to kill and destroy after Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

DID American wisdom contribute to these results? Do they demonstrate the intelligence and capacity for government of the American people or its leaders? If these results are not to be attributed to any particularly great capacity for intelligence and leadership on the part of government and people, at least we can conclude that on the whole we have been able to avoid the worst. Germany and Japan were not so burdened with reparations and so damaged by vengeance as to make their recovery impossible. Europe was aided in its recovery by the Marshall Plan, Japan by what appears in retrospect to have been a remarkably successful period of occupation and government by Americans. Indeed, the heritage of that period of American rule is now stoutly defended by the Japanese Left and seems impregnable to major change by the ruling Japanese party: a constitution which has survived without change; an educational system, broad-based and effective, that seems to adapt American forms to Japanese culture; a pattern of widespread popular participation in politics; strong independent unions in at least some sectors (government, education). Where the United States ruled with the least restraint, as in Japan, it did well. But one should not underestimate the contribution of the Japanese.

Similarly, a period of informed economic consensus contributed to American prosperity, and the prosperity of the West, through the 1960's. That consensus, basically around Keynesianism, did not prevent severe difficulties in the 1970's, with unmanageable bouts of inflation, and ever higher unemployment (the inflation has been tamed—but hardly brought down to the levels of the 1950's or 1960's—the unemployment remains high). Our self-confidence in the management of other countries was damaged decisively by the Vietnam enterprise, our self-confidence in the management of the economy was broken in the 1970's, and what with enormous deficits has not returned in the 1980's, despite the self-congratulation of the present administration. Is it a failure of economic knowledge, of leadership, of the capacity for government? All three, one would think, as economists diverge more radically than in the past, as leadership seems to be interested in scoring points rather than attacking basic problems, as institutional changes make it more difficult for Congress to act.

JUDGMENT on our ability to control atomic weapons has to be less positive—except for the one overwhelming fact that we have been forty years without the use of the atomic bomb in war, or indeed any war at all between the world's major powers, something which we might in part attribute to the existence of the atomic bomb, if not to the competence of American leaders, or their counterparts. I suspect our capacity to make progress in this area has declined over time: one thinks of successes such as the ban on testing in the atmosphere, the withdrawal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba, SALT I, all of which gave hope of some reduction of tension. One wonders whether one can expect anything of the same order in the future. Atomic weapons have been integrally built

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into our defense plans in Europe. As a result, the Soviet Union is steadily given the propaganda advantage: it can assert that it will not use weapons first, it can propose moratoria, in neither of which does American leadership feel it can follow. I think we are wrong in this, and yet I know my inadequacy as to specific knowledge, and am half-convinced when I read an Albert Wohlstetter or an Edward N. Luttwak. We all long for some decisive move away from the improvement and increase of weapons, their incorporation into war plans, their ever more extensive targeting. One is torn between advocating the grand gesture: no first strike, indeed no second strike (what would be the point after a first strike had wrought its incredible devastation?), in which case, why atomic weapons at all? But sober minds, the ones we elect in government to lead us, the ones we choose as experts in this area, insist that that is a path of terrible danger.

But we cannot talk about the danger of atomic weapons abstracted from the reality of the powers that possess them, which means we cannot talk about the danger without some understanding of Soviet Russia, or totalitarianism, or Marxism-Leninism, and some determination of the ground of our forty-year conflict. Our fear of massive atomic annihilation is tied to the fact that the other great atomic power is Soviet Russia. We see it as so frightful an antagonist that it may loose the bombs on us or our allies, and indeed some of us think the situation so extreme that in certain circumstances we may have to loose the bombs on the Russians. What is it that might lead, them or us, to such an extremity?

THE hostility between Soviet Russia and the United States is deep, but it is not based on conflicts over territory (not between us, anyway), on conflicting economic interests (we have more of an economic argument with our ally Japan), on differences of race, or on passionate disagreements over religion. "What is it about?" Thomas Powers asked in an article in the *Atlantic* (January 1984), and one may well ask it again.

The simple answer "totalitarianism" gives trouble. China, too, is "totalitarian." China doesn't have the atomic-bomb delivery capacity of the Soviet Union. If it did, would we fear it as much? Perhaps then the problem is not totalitarianism as such, but totalitarianism linked to great power or to an expansionist intention or ideology. If "what it is about" is fear of Soviet expansionist desires or commitment, we may well be mistaken. After the great gulp of Eastern Europe forty years ago, Russia's boundaries have remained fixed, and it was even made to withdraw from a piece of Austria and a piece of Iran. It wants "friends" along its frontiers, and it is not easy to distinguish the desire to keep neighbors friendly from expansionism. Yet Finland, committed to neutrality, does not seem to have great problems in maintaining a democratic and capitalist state on the borders of Soviet Russia. Even Afghanistan doesn't settle the matter. It may be part of a design to expand to the sea, or to expand Marxism-Leninism, but it may be simply an effort to prevent the overthrow of a client regime, as in the case of Hungary or Czechoslovakia.

It is not easy to distinguish measures of defense from measures of offense. The United States, when it ringed Russia with bases and missiles, had no intention of invading or destabilizing it. And yet from the Russian point of view it may not have appeared so.

But to say the root of the problem is expansionism (perhaps "deeply" Russian rather than totalitarian) does not get to the heart of the matter. Do we really expect Russia to move into West Germany, Austria, or Yugoslavia because of a drive to expand, parallel to Hitler's move to the East? The elaborate preparations we make for the defense of Europe were once based on the expectation that Soviet Russia would invade Western Europe in order to incorporate those states into its empire. Today that seems far-fetched; we rather fear war there would break out because of some crisis elsewhere—and just what would lead to such a devastatingly dangerous move is not clear. Conflict with the U.S. in the Middle East? Or elsewhere in the Third World? A dangerous threat to internal stability within Russia? The scenarios that would lead to the invasion that a good part of our monumental military preparations are designed to deter are not clear to me.

What is it all about? Not interest, in any obvious sense; or racial and religious hostility; or the drive of two empires (or one of them) to expansion, knocking into the other; so what is the issue? I will give one explanation that is the best going, and then, owing to some lingering skepticism, one more. The explanation that is the best going derives from the character of Marxism-Leninism as the state ideology of the Soviet Union. The issue here is not that the Soviet leaders have a missionary intention to spread Marxism-Leninism throughout the world. They do not have the manner of missionaries, of impassioned advocates of their ideals. They are no Khomeinis. Nor can they be unaware of the decline of Communism in Western Europe and Japan, and its inability to make any headway in the United States.

But whatever the incapacity of this ideology to gain any substantial adherence in Western Europe, or even in Eastern Europe, where the general disdain in which it is held is obvious, it does seem it has the power to move men's minds in the Third World. When it does, Russia sees ways to discomfit its powerful antagonist, particularly since the heritage of colonialism inevitably gives every nationalist movement in the Third World an anti-American cast. Marxism-Leninism is at hand to explain poverty and powerlessness in the face of the capitalist West, and proposes means

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to overcome it. Russia now does a good deal actively to propagate an ideology in the Third World that has little support in the First or Second. With what effect is not clear. One hears of thousands of fellowships to Lumumba University, but if common sense is any guide, the experience of being a Third World student in Moscow is as likely to lead to hostility to Russia and Marxism-Leninism as the reverse. Nor is it clear how closely linked the various Communist parties of the Third World are to Moscow. The West European parties are more loosely linked than they once were. One suspects the Marxist-Leninist movements that so concern us, in Central America, in the Philippines, and elsewhere, gain their strength from poverty and corrupt government, adopt Marxism-Leninism, as modified for rebellion in backward countries by Mao, Castro, and other successful revolutionaries, look to Moscow or its surrogates for support, and get it.

If we talk then about American success in fighting the expansion of totalitarianism, it is this process we are talking about, and while we have not done disastrously, neither have we halted the process. Cuba and Vietnam and Nicaragua are its great successes; Indonesia its greatest failure. Islam seems to provide a perfectly satisfactory alternative ideology, as free-market capitalist democracy does not.

This is the process. But is it reason enough for weapons able to destroy the world many times over to be pointed at each other? It does seem a disproportionate response, both for Soviet Russia and for us, and we thus have alternative official explanations. For Soviet Russia: these weapons are to deter the mad capitalists from destroying our flourishing Marxist-Leninist fatherland, the aim they have harbored in their hearts ever since they landed Marines at Murmansk; for the United States: they are to deter a monumental attack on Western Europe, designed to win that prosperous area for Marxism-Leninism, a design Soviet Russia has harbored ever since Lenin and Trotsky called upon the West to rise in support of the Russian revolution.

I HAVE said we have to understand our enemy, and the enmity that divides us, to understand why we make no progress in avoiding the danger of the destruction of humanity. But my best understanding of that enemy, and our enmity, gives me no real explanation, and so I give another, which does not satisfy me either. It is that the terrible destructive power of the weapons themselves, in the hands of any power whom we cannot consider fundamentally friendly, and cannot trust, must lead to every possible means to counter them, however unlikely their use. The bases for hostility are not sufficient in themselves to lead to the build-up of such terrible weapons, but once they exist their awesome power leads to ever greater distrust. The weapons themselves, however, not the initial hostility, provide the dynamic that drives an ever more elaborate escalation to counter the other side's weapons. Or, as Powers puts it: "When Germany fell in 1945, only two Great Powers remained in the world—Russia and the United States. Only Russia has the power to threaten the United States. Only the United States has the power to threaten Russia. We fear each other. We wish each other ill. All the rest is detail."

I take the details more seriously than Powers does, but I think he is basically right. One of the details that follows is that to justify the awful possible conclusion of this process, we are impelled to make Soviet Russian reality and intentions and ideology even more awful than they are. We are forced into a process of demonization in order to justify the hell our conflict may lead to.

I am at a loss as to how to reverse this process, but my understanding of it leads me to be skeptical that any great technical breakthrough, whether the Strategic Defense Initiative, or any other, will bring it to a halt, or do anything to weaken the sway of totalitarianism in the world, expand the reach of democracy, or improve our own security. These objectives are not to be advanced through a greater development of atomic weaponry. Thus I would prefer to put more weight on talk and even temporary halts in testing and research than on the hope that escalating to the next level will change anything.

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Owen Harries: What Elliot Cohen called for in the first of his challenges was an extension into the peacetime life of the country of the mobilization of power and concentration of effort necessary to fight a war for survival.

In 1945 he was far from alone in issuing such a call. In the United States (and even more so in Britain) the wartime experience was in some respects a very seductive one. A purposeful state acting to express a virtually united national will; its assumption of vast powers in order to do so; the ready acquiescence of a people prepared to subordinate sectional interests to the overriding goal of victory—the contrast with the stagnation, class conflict, and determined opposition to the growth of state power which had characterized the 1930's was dramatic. By the time Elliot Cohen wrote, the state's "mustering" of the "giant's

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strength" had been vindicated not only by total victory but by a reinvigorated economy and the end of mass unemployment.

Small wonder, then, that many drew from this the lesson that the key to solving the nation's peacetime problems was the mobilization of the nation's resources by the state, in order to make a planned assault on them. For the intellectuals of the time, most of whom had a predilection for some form or other of socialism, the wartime example provided a powerful polemical weapon: the people's war should be followed by the people's peace.

What is wrong with this way of thinking, and with Elliot Cohen's "challenge," should be obvious. A course of action appropriate in a time of crisis, when there is virtual unanimity on the overriding priority to be given to a single goal, is far from appropriate in normal times, when there is no such agreement. In a pluralistic, democratic society, various ways of life and interests—with different and often conflicting priorities—are left as free as possible to pursue their particular ends and to compete, and the state adjusts and adjudicates the competition. Surrendering great power to the state as a temporary measure to resist an enemy and ensure survival may be necessary, though it always involves risk. Doing the same thing on a permanent basis must result in the enervation and ultimate destruction of a liberal society.

Merely to juxtapose the image of a wartime "giant's strength" and that of the "arts of peaceful living" makes the point. The accumulation of strength is appropriate to the imposition of will, not to the cultivation of such arts; and the vitality of a pluralistic society is ensured not by mustering strength but by liberating energy and initiative.

How influential has the kind of thinking represented by Elliott Cohen's "challenge" been? In Britain it was so strong at the war's end that it actually prevailed. That country continued to live substantially under "command" conditions for the best part of a decade after 1945, and since then the role and power of the state, as well as the expectations centered on it, have remained much greater than ever before in Britain's peacetime history. Predictably, the result has not been revitalization but a galloping debilitation, and increasing social division and strife.

It is a matter for profound relief that the United States declined to respond with the same alacrity to the challenge-cum-invitation to embrace wartime statism as an ongoing way of life. After 1945, America essentially remained true to its pluralistic traditions, and the result was a release of productive energy leading to the greatest sustained surge ever recorded in the living standards of ordinary people. At the same time the state effectively played its classic liberal role of adjusting and adjudicating among interests, notably in the area of race relations.

It would be nice to end the story at that point. Nice, but not possible; for over time America, too, increasingly turned to statist solutions. The war analogy drew like a magnet—witness, for example, the very terms "War on Poverty" and "Peace Corps." Partly this was due to the new role of the United States as the leader of the West against another totalitarian enemy, a role that genuinely required an increase in the power of the state to cope with quasi-war circumstances. Partly, too, it reflected the force of the *Zeitgeist*. The natural inclinations of the American liberal establishment, whose views prevailed until very recently, were reinforced powerfully by the examples set by virtually every other Western country (not to have an important and growing "public sector" was to be politically primitive and inhumane). The uninformed but intimidating radicalism that accompanied the Vietnam war supplied an even stronger push. Predictably, the only clear and consistent domestic result of the "mustering" of the "giant's strength" that followed has been the increasing domination of the state over society; otherwise, unintended consequences have overshadowed intended ones. As the process has continued it has, as always, fed on itself, stimulating the growth of a "New Class," which has both an ideological and a career interest in further enhancing the state's role.

It says much for the vitality of the pluralist tradition in America that all this has produced a powerful reaction culminating in the election of a President dedicated to liberating the "arts of peaceful living" from the giant's grip. But it says much for the magnitude of the task that so far he has achieved very little.

If the first of Elliot Cohen's challenges was misconceived, his second and third were only too real. The atomic bomb and the vast expansion of the Soviet empire were the two dominant facts confronting the United States at the end of 1945. Moreover, the challenges they presented were intimately related: if either had not existed, the nature of the other—and therefore the response it would have required and elicited—would have been radically different.

Over the last forty years, the challenge represented by nuclear weapons has most usually been posed—as if the matter were perfectly obvious—in terms of the urgency of imposing effective safeguards and control over their use, so as to prevent catastrophic war. This is an inadequate formulation, but accepting it for the moment, two things are evident.

First, that challenge has been met successfully until now, and there is every reason to believe that it will continue to be met with equal success. Despite dire predictions, extending from 1945 to the present, of the inevitability and imminence of catastrophe, not only has there been no nuclear war but there has not been a single military use of

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a nuclear weapon since Nagasaki—no nuclear accident of political significance, no terrorist use of the weapon, no peace-threatening incident of nuclear blackmail, and, in terms of early postwar predictions, surprisingly little "horizontal" proliferation. This, in a world torn by ideological and power conflicts of exceptional severity, one in which several countries have been ruled at various times by authentic madmen, amounts to an outstanding success story.

There *has* been a spectacular "vertical" proliferation in the weaponry of the United States and the Soviet Union, but there is no evidence that this has increased the risk of nuclear catastrophe. Indeed, the equally spectacular improvements in the technology of surveillance, communication, and control (combined with more modest ones in negotiating mutually agreed safety arrangements) have certainly reduced greatly the risk of war resulting from surprise, misunderstanding, accident, or insubordination—which, if one assumes a rational self-interest in survival (personal as well as national) on the part of decision-makers, constitute the main threats of disaster.

Second, the credit for this record of success clearly belongs overwhelmingly to the United States. Until the end of the 1940's it had a monopoly on the bomb; long after that it retained the capacity to launch a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union while being virtually invulnerable to a counterstrike. The U.S., and it alone, therefore had for many years the option of using nuclear weapons—militarily or politically—to further its interests, with little or no fear of direct retaliation. It did not exploit that advantage: not during the Communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia; not during the Berlin blockade; not in order to prevent the Soviets from testing a nuclear device; not during the bloody and inconclusive Korean war; nor on any other occasion (which makes nonsense of the charge that America set out from the beginning to use nuclear weapons in an intimidating way). A plausible case may be made that Western interests would have been better served if the U.S. *had* pressed its advantage much harder—if, for example, it had followed the advice given by Bertrand Russell and others in the late 1940's to confront the Soviets with an ultimatum, backed by a readiness to use the bomb. There can be no doubt that if the boot had been on the other foot the Soviet Union would have had no compunction in using it to stamp its will on the world. But America's leaders realized, rightly, that given the character of the American people this was not really an option for their country.

THE true challenge posed by nuclear weapons has involved much more than finding ways of controlling and limiting them. It has involved using their existence to prevent war while, at the same time, protecting the vital interests of the West—and doing so in the face of a formidable and sustained opposition from the Left, which has had all the easy and popular arguments at its disposal. Successive American administrations have had the courage and determination to accept this challenge, which more than makes up for their shortcomings in other respects. For it is the nuclear deterrent alone that has kept the peace through a period of unprecedented international tension.

But it has done more than that. It has enabled the countries of the West to meet the threat posed by Soviet power and ambition without transforming themselves into permanent garrison states, in a way that would have done terrible—perhaps terminal—damage to their liberal and democratic character, and blighted their economic prospects. If one contemplates the state of affairs at the end of 1945 as it would have been in the absence of nuclear weapons, it is clear that the choice facing the West would have been either to remain armed to the teeth for as long as the Soviet Union did so, and to bear the costs that would involve, or to accept military inferiority and the consequences flowing from it.

Choosing either course would have meant an entirely different postwar history for the West (and indeed, for the world). The first would have ruled out the demobilization that actually took place (in America's case from 12 million men at arms to 1.4 million in two years) and involved the permanent maintenance of huge, and hideously expensive, military establishments. It would have meant no postwar economic boom in consumer goods; no economic "miracles" or burgeoning welfare states in Europe; no transformation of the living standards of ordinary people; no extension of liberal and "progressive" values in Western societies; no unprecedentedly lavish aid programs for developing countries. Instead, and to hark back, survival would have required a massive and sustained "mustering" of the "giant's strength," and all that would have involved in terms of controls, directions, demands, and scarcities on a scale dwarfing that which we have actually experienced. Thus, the measures necessary to secure the physical survival of the countries of the West would have put in jeopardy their survival as free societies.

The consequence of opting for the second course—accepting military inferiority in the interest of a return to some kind of normal peacetime life, and trusting the Soviet Union (under Stalin in the first instance, it should be remembered) not to exploit its advantage—would have been the rapid domination of the whole of Europe by the Soviets. In all probability, that would have been followed, quickly but belatedly, by the conversion of the United States to the first option, massive militarization. Whichever course would have been followed, the ultimate outcome—one which would have arrived well before now—would almost certainly have been World War III.

It was the existence of nuclear weapons that de-

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livered the United States and its allies from this excruciating choice—which enabled them to have their cake and eat it too—by providing a cheap, effective deterrent to Soviet aggression that was also (compared to permanent mass mobilization) relatively undisruptive of the social order.

THIS is not to deny that dependence on nuclear weapons has carried heavy costs. Indeed, its very success in making it possible to maintain peace and security without huge sacrifices and disruptions (while, in fact, enjoying unprecedented prosperity and freedom) has attenuated the West's sense of the reality of the conflict and the gravity of the Soviet threat. This, in turn, has made it enormously difficult to sustain a response to the threat that attempts anything more ambitious than barely countering it. In particular, it continues to make it difficult to take adequate measures to supplement, and thus reduce dependence on, nuclear deterrence by strengthening conventional forces. These effects are most acutely evident in Western Europe, whose dependence on the American nuclear umbrella and loss of responsibility for its own survival have led to a kind of political emasculation, resulting in a peculiar mixture of fatalism and complacency.

Apart from this, dependence on nuclear weapons by both the United States and the Soviet Union increases the likelihood of their acquisition by other countries. Horizontal proliferation looms as the most serious danger associated with these weapons in the coming decades.

There are also the psychic costs of "living with the bomb"—and the growth of an international "peace movement" concerned to reflect, exaggerate, and exploit them. The fact that there are some costs of this kind is not to be disputed. But it is legitimate to ask whether many people literally lose sleep because of the bomb—in the way that they regularly do, for example, over jobs, money, health, love affairs, and marriages. As for the "peace movement," its effect—intended by some, unintended by others, and achieved by focusing attention overwhelmingly on the ghastly consequences of using nuclear weapons while ignoring their critical functional role of making the initiation of war an utterly irrational act—has been to obscure the nature of the problem of securing peace in the world and to undermine the conditions necessary to sustain Western democracies.

These costs are formidable. But as the man said about the drawbacks of old age, when one considers the alternative they are not unacceptable.

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Sidney Hook: It is safe to say that were Elliot Cohen alive and well today, the mood of expectation and hope in which he wrote his prospectus of world concern in 1945 would be replaced by one of disappointment and despair. This would not be a consequence of our failure to make definite gains in the arts of peaceful living, in the area of civil rights, in the extension of the welfare state, despite its waywardness, but in the reactions to them by the dominant centers of public opinion: the media, the universities, and among intellectuals generally. Were he writing today about his twilight years and commenting on the state of our nation, I would hazard the guess that Elliot Cohen would let stand the typographical error with which a typist rendered the title of one of the concluding chapters of my autobiography: "Twilight Tears."

Consider, for example, the rationalizations offered by so many American intellectuals who refused to support the "cold war" of defense against Communism—a war initiated by the Kremlin's rejection of the generous Marshall Plan to rebuild the European economy, one offered to the Communist regimes of Czechoslovakia and Poland, too. "Cold-war liberals" became in many quarters an epithet of derision, and those so dubbed were caricatured as defending the still existing inequities and injustices of American life, which they were combating at least as valiantly as their critics. The antagonism to those who were opposing the ideological aggressions of the Soviet Union grew in intensity even as the Communist reign of terror became more ferocious in the Soviet Union and its satellite countries, and even as, slowly but surely, with slight reversals, the conditions of employment, welfare, and civil rights improved in the United States.

There was a striking irony in the growing hostility, as the years went by, to the cold-war liberals from their detractors and opponents among the intellectual classes, loosely defined. (I am not referring here to Soviet apologists who lapsed into silence after Khrushchev's revelations, and events in Hungary and Poland, but to those who, no longer burdened by the need to defend the Kremlin, fell back on an automatic anti-American foreign policy as evidence of their independence.) All of them, with the exception of a handful of politically irresponsible Trotskyists, had been enthusiastic supporters of the war against Hitler. Yet at the time (1941), in every sector of American life—employment, social welfare, civil rights, especially race relations—conditions were worse, much worse, than those that existed when cold-war liberals took up the challenge posed by the Communist offensive against the free world. Goebbels for one had jeered at American hypocrisy in protesting the Aryan laws of the Hitler regime in view of the lynching of blacks and the legalized Jim Crow legislation in some areas of the U.S.

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If the truly parlous state of affairs in the U.S. in the 1930's was no moral bar to opposing Nazism, why were the incomparably better conditions in almost all areas in the subsequent decades not sufficient to justify wholehearted opposition to the Gulag culture of the Soviet Union? Could there be any doubt in the mind of any informed person about what would happen to political and religious minorities, even peaceful dissenters, as the Communist regimes extended their sway? Of course there were differences among the Soviet Union, Cuba, China, Vietnam. There were differences among Hitler, Horthy, Mussolini, and the Japanese warlords, too, yet everyone knew what their rule meant for their victims. But when, regardless now of the wisdom of the original American intervention in Vietnam, we predicted that the victory of the North Vietnamese would be followed by a blood bath, Anthony Lewis, Tom Wicker, and other columnists scoffed. To this day Lewis denies that there has been a blood bath, despite the boat people and the message from the multitudes in the Vietnam reeducation camps, "Send us poison."

THE second of Elliot Cohen's basic concerns was "the ultimate challenge of nuclear weapons." When one goes back to read the prophecies of doom uttered not only by demagogues and politicians but by otherwise intelligent scientists, one is startled by the political naiveté that has characterized large sections of the American scientific community. I vividly recall the predictions made after World War I, especially in the 30's, that in consequence of the inevitable use of poison gas in the impending world war, the planet would become uninhabitable. We know that Hitler had plenty of poison gas and that his emotional instability bordered on insanity. Yet for obvious reasons he refrained from the use of weapons that would have brought an even more formidable retaliation.

The American scientific community should be justly proud that after Hiroshima it prevailed upon the United States government to bring atomic power under civilian control. Even more remarkable, in the wake of the war and evidence of Soviet aggressiveness, it induced the government to accept the Baruch-Lilienthal proposals that would have internationalized the holding and use of atomic energy for civilian purposes. These proposals were accepted by all the nations of the world in the UN and vetoed by the Kremlin. Bertrand Russell, whose pacifism was comparable to Einstein's, was so impressed with the generosity of the U.S. in offering to surrender its monopoly of atomic arms to an international authority, that he foolishly urged an atomic attack on the Soviet Union if it continued its intransigent rejection. To him the Kremlin's refusal to accept the reasonable provisions of the offer—whose details could have been negotiated—indicated that the Soviet Union was getting ready to resume and intensify the cold war against the West.

What lesson did the American scientific community draw from the failure of the Soviet Union to accept the enlightened policy that the leaders of that community had induced the American government to accept?

The dismaying answer is that, with the exception of a very few—among them John von Neumann, Eugene Wigner, and Edward Teller—the most articulate and influential spokesmen within the scientific community drew no political lesson whatsoever from the Soviet rejection. They seemed unalarmed at the danger to peace and freedom caused by the foreign policies of Stalin and his successors. Widespread among them was the view that despite its respect for, and sensitivity to, the judgments of its scientific advisers, the U.S. government, if it had not initiated the cold war, was nonetheless equally responsible for its continuation.

The laudable desire for peace led not a few —Einstein was representative of this sentiment— to endorse a policy of appeasement toward the Soviet Union, despite the bitter fruits of such a policy in the past, and to urge American scientists to withdraw from any defense research. This withdrawal was urged in full consciousness that although American scientists could undertake it with political impunity, any similar behavior by Soviet scientists was fraught with grave danger to their freedom and to the welfare of their families. In the nature of the case such a withdrawal was sure to be unilateral. Indeed, there was a widespread withdrawal by American scientists from any research which was of a restricted nature, and in which security regulations were observed.

Worse yet, any time American proposals to increase the defense and retaliatory capacities of the United States were put forth there were voices which assured us that if the U.S. would forgo these measures, so would the Soviet Union. Thus during the hydrogen-bomb controversy of the late 1940's, it was confidently asserted that if we did not develop the bomb, neither would the Soviets. Yet we now know from Andrei Sakharov that in 1950, when Truman finally resolved the controversy and gave the signal to begin the quest, Soviet scientists, including Sakharov, had already been engaged in that work for eighteen months. Today we hear the same objection with respect to the Strategic Defense Initiative despite abundant evidence that Soviet weapons scientists have been pursuing the same line of inquiry. But that cuts little ice with the editors of the *Scientific American* or the Union of Concerned Scientists.

I recall years ago when discussion of proposals for civil defense were current—proposals against which some weighty arguments could be made—there was one objection I could never understand. It was that the Kremlin would immediately construe the construction of civil-defense shelters as

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a move toward preemptive war. That the Soviet Union had built and maintained elaborate civil-defense structures was readily admitted. But it was never made clear why if we did not construe this as a move toward preemptive war on the part of the Soviets they would interpret the American action, lagging as it did behind theirs, as an imminent threat against them.

ONE would have thought that the fate of Andrei Sakharov—the brutality and cruelty of his treatment at the hands of the Kremlin—would have cured whatever political naiveté American scientists possessed about the nature of the two cultures. The British bestowed the Order of Merit upon a man who was the West's severest critic, Bertrand Russell. By contrast, the prolonged agony to which Sakharov and his wife have been subjected reveals to the entire world Soviet ruthlessness toward the slightest criticism of its foreign and human-rights policies. Again to its credit, the American scientific community has made loud and continuous protest against the inhumanity of the treatment accorded Sakharov. But it has not done the only thing that, if anything, could lead the Kremlin to abandon its persecution of Sakharov and other peaceful dissidents, namely, organize a boycott of *all* scientific and scholarly exchanges and meetings between the U.S. and the USSR.

The wisdom of and justification for these scientific and scholarly exchanges, even without reference to the martyred victims of Soviet domestic and foreign policy, are other matters. That the Kremlin seeks to encourage such exchanges especially in technology as well as basic science is well known. It never gives up the hope of learning something in its own interests and against those of the U.S. The delegations to almost every scientific conference in which the Soviets participate contain individuals who are not scientists but members of the KGB, sent to keep an eye on the behavior of the Soviet delegates. I recall Eugene Rabinovitch, one of the former editors of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, and a regular participant in the Pugwash Conferences, telling me that he could always spot people of that kidney not only by what they didn't know about science but by their invariable tendency to eavesdrop on conversations among Soviet and American scientists. No dissenter from Soviet foreign or military policy has ever been permitted to attend the Pugwash Conferences, but almost every American participant is a public and proud critic of some important aspect of his country's foreign and military policy.

It goes without saying that the failure of many American scientists to understand the true nature of Soviet totalitarianism and the disastrous consequences of appeasement does not flow from any sympathy with Communism. It is motivated by a highly laudable concern for peace accompanied by a deplorable failure to appreciate Sakharov's insight that genuine security can only be based "on a stabilization of international relations, a repudiation of expansionist policies, the strengthening of international trust, openness, and pluralization of the socialist societies, [and] the observance of human rights. . . ."

THE question of how successfully we have met the dangerous threat of totalitarianism since 1945 can be answered by looking at the map of the world in that year and the map of the world today, which shows, among other grim things, the absurdity of interpreting Soviet policy as a continuation of czarist foreign policy. No Russian statesman in his wildest hegemonic dream ever conceived of a day when Russian forces in various political guises would make an appearance in Africa and Central America. Czarist Russia even let Alaska go for a song.

The danger of Soviet totalitarianism to the survival of the free world today is greater than the threat of Nazi totalitarianism was in the 30's. Among the reasons we may list the failure of Western nations to learn from the mistaken strategies that resulted in what Winston Churchill called "the unnecessary war"; the fear that any armed resistance to Soviet aggression in order to implement the policy of containment will necessarily trigger a nuclear holocaust; and the erosion of a commitment to the basic values of democracy, in times of crisis, among the Western powers.

It would require volumes to do justice to these and other relevant considerations. I content myself with reference to two incidents whose symbolic significance reveals the extent to which faith in the free society has eroded since Elliot Cohen put out the first issue of COMMENTARY.

1. When the Soviet leader Yuri Andropov died last year, George McGovern, the presidential candidate of the Democratic party in 1972 and still a foremost figure in one of its powerful wings, issued a statement which in effect expressed regret that Andropov, the former head of the KGB, the architect of its post-Khrushchevian policy toward Soviet dissidents (including Sakharov), had died instead of Ronald Reagan: It ran: "It is a modern tragedy that one of the Soviet Union's most intelligent leaders has served and died during the administration of one of the most ill-informed and dangerous men ever to occupy the White House."

What was almost as disheartening as McGovern's callous and politically obscene outburst was the absence of any public outcry from the press.

This elementary failure to distinguish between Reagan, McGovern's opponent *within* the democratic process, and Andropov, an enemy *of* the democratic process—a failure of which multiple examples can be given—is evidence that whatever civic education in the United States has attempted to do, it has failed in developing understanding or loyalty to the values which underlie free society.

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2. There are many sources of the current confusion in the United States on what precisely is at stake in the struggle for a free society. The most pervasive source of the confusion is the failure of our universities to fulfill their academic mission, their growing politicization reflected in the thought and behavior of the dominant militant student factions, and the concomitant failure of those faculty and students who disapprove of this undemocratic and often disruptive behavior to take a public stand against it. As morally outrageous as the policy of apartheid in South Africa is, the magnitude of the terror against the Afghans by the Soviet Union is worse. The first certainly justifies protest, the second even more. Yet no student body has ever been convulsed by protest against the wholesale slaughter of civilian populations in Afghanistan.

Effective opposition to apartheid can take various forms. The South African blacks themselves differ over the likelihood of success of different measures to improve their political and economic lot. But on most American campuses when the issue is raised, any difference, regardless of how well reasoned and sincerely motivated, over the wisdom and effectiveness of total and immediate disinvestment, has been treated as a defense of apartheid, its advocates subjected to insult, and their speech disrupted.

The members of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York, deliberating over how best to weaken the institution of apartheid, were denounced to their faces as "fascists" and "murderers" because they were unconvinced of the effectiveness of total disinvestment. No disciplinary action was taken against any disruptive students. The irony of this situation is that a very strong case can be made for the view that more can be accomplished, especially for the overwhelming mass of black workers, by inducing American companies doing business in South Africa to observe the Sullivan principles of employment than by total divestiture that would close off this avenue to influence company policy. Perhaps the even greater irony, as the chairman of the Board of Trustees of SUNY remarked, is that "the quintessence of apartheid—intolerance, intimidation, incivility—are being introduced to campuses by some of those who are opposed to it in South Africa."

It is somewhat late in the day to sound the alarm. These practices were introduced to American campuses in the 60's and they have been a recurrent phenomenon since. Berkeley was the home of the so-called "Free Speech Movement." But today there is no freedom of speech on the Berkeley campus for anyone who expresses a point of view disapproved of by a militant minority, especially for speakers who defend American foreign policy. And this is not only true of Berkeley but of all campuses. Angela Davis, an eloquent spokesman for the Kremlin's domestic terror and foreign policies, can always rely upon a well-paid welcome and respectful hearing before an attentive and large audience. But let Jeane J. Kirkpatrick attempt to speak at these very institutions and her meetings will be disrupted. So far as I know, no students have been seriously disciplined for these shameful violations of the very codes of behavior developed jointly by the faculties and student bodies of the institutions concerned. To avoid the embarrassing publicity of such incidents, both administrators and faculties more and more adopt a form of self-censorship. They scrupulously refrain from inviting public and scholarly figures who will meet with the disapproval of militant extremists.

THE ideals Elliot Cohen fought for are as valid today as they were when he proclaimed them. But the struggle for them has become more difficult.

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Jeane J. Kirkpatrick: Elliot Cohen's comment and COMMENTARY's questions confront us with the essential elements of the American experience of the postwar world.

The first question is easiest. The U.S. has applied in peacetime the strengths demonstrated in war. Continuing economic growth and widely shared prosperity have transformed our lives. New technologies have made it possible for more people to live longer, in greater comfort, with better health than ever before. More inclusive concepts of community and cooperation—so vital in war—stimulated wide sharing of the benefits of the new technology. The result has been a revolution in the opportunities available to Americans—all Americans. That opportunity revolution has not ended.

As Ben Wattenberg never tires of demonstrating, measured by normal indicators of social progress, things have gotten better and better for more and more Americans. The fact that it sounds insensitive and reactionary to say so is another matter. This problem derives from a dimension of post-World War II life not mentioned in Elliot Cohen's comments.

As COMMENTARY readers are well aware, dramatic changes in the political culture of American elites have occurred in the years since World War II. During World War II, no one, or almost no one, doubted that democracy—"bourgeois" democracy, based on periodic competitive elections,

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free press, and assembly—was greatly superior to dictatorship. And not many doubted that the new, totalitarian dictatorships were most dangerous of all to human freedom and development. No one, or almost no one, in the United States doubted that totalitarian states were aggressive and that democracies were not. The notion of the moral equivalence of the U.S. and a great dictatorship was unthinkable.

American success in World War II was a product of our national unity and confidence as well as of production, cooperation, planning, and courage. Success in peace also requires consensus and confidence. But unity and confidence were the objects of a massive attack by cultural elites who despised the very "bourgeois" commitments and habits on which democracy rests: participation and restraint, moderation, compromise, respect for authority and law. This attack on the cultural foundations of democracy was paralleled by an attack on the habits on which economic prosperity rests: work, discipline, merit, competition, innovation. All were viewed as "establishment" values. So, too, were freedom and tolerance, science and "linear" reason.

It is ironic and tragic that at the same time that our society had produced more freedom and well-being for more people, the institutions responsible for this achievement seemed unworthy to many in the elites who in a slightly earlier period would have entered key institutional roles and assumed responsibility for their preservation. It seems clear that the progressive realization of our basic values bred progressively greater demands and impatience, reminding one of Gaetano Mosca's observation that civilizations perish not from their vices but from an excess of their virtues.

THERE were utopian elements present in postwar expectations, and these too have caused problems. Postwar planners did not just anticipate the end of war, they anticipated a "great new era" of unprecedented peace and international cooperation, from which war would be banished like an outlaw from a frontier town. The United Nations was the institutional embodiment of these hopes.

The United Nations was based from the outset on falsification.

Founding the UN required denying and falsifying the nature of the Soviet Union. The UN Charter assumed that member states would be democracies and share the democratic values of the Charter. The Soviet Union was not a democracy. Founding the UN also required falsifying the relations between the Soviet Union and those two "autonomous Soviet Socialist republics," the Ukraine and Byelorussia. The Charter required that members be independent states. The Ukraine and Byelorussia were neither autonomous nor republics. Why did the United States and its democratic allies accept this falsification? Presumably, the reason was that they could not bear to face the fact that even after this most recent, most terrible war, there remained a powerful, repressive, expansionist dictatorship to cope with.

Nothing in the Soviet past justified optimism concerning its future behavior. Winston Churchill knew this, Franklin D. Roosevelt should have. After all, the same man who had conducted show trials and purges now incorporated the Baltic states, invaded and ravaged Poland, still ruled Russia, and was moving in a determined fashion to consolidate power in Eastern Europe in the shadow of the Red Army. Optimism about the new era of peace and the United Nations was maintained only by denial.

Denial is the Siamese twin of wish-fulfillment fantasy. Denial of the persistence of powerful repressive dictatorships—such as Stalin's Russia—was a precondition to indulging in the fantasy that a great new era of permanent peace was about to begin.

That denial and that fantasy have been permament features of the postwar world.

Denial disarms targeted populations while they are conquered. It disarms the neighbors of targeted nations while they are readied for conquest. It has disarmed the democratic West by blinding us to the moral and strategic issues involved in the expansion of the Soviet empire.

In his book *L'Utopie Meurtrière* ["The Murderous Utopia"] Pin Yathay describes the deception and denial that accompanied Pol Pot's seizure and consolidation of power in Cambodia: eager credence given to rumors of negotiations, of coalition, of a government of national reconciliation. He describes the sudden inexplicable forced exodus from Phnom Penh, "an endless chain of indescribable horror, silent tragedies. People without food, without clothes, without family, . . . expelled from their hospitals and their laboratories without explanation, without goods of any kind . . . : a strange procession of damned and sleepwalkers." Even then, he tells us, disbelief in tragedy and tyranny persisted down to the point where he and his family were finally trapped—in slave labor, constant surveillance, starvation.

Denial is the foundation of both utopianism and appeasement. It discourages prudence and mocks reform.

Our century is rich in such tales of betrayal and denial, of extravagant dreams and bestial reality, of slavery and violence. We can read those stories in many languages—in German and Yiddish, in Russian, Spanish, Polish and Czech, in Vietnamese and Cambodian, French and English.

THE shape of problems to come was already discernible in 1945. Elliot Cohen in fact discerned them and showed a political realism rare in his time or ours.

Concern and fear lest the human race self-destruct via nuclear holocaust are not rare. They are commonplace, so commonplace that nuclear war

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has become a metaphor for danger, a symbol of all the dangers confronting the world from war. This symbolic status of nuclear weapons explains why so many Americans see nuclear arms-control agreements as tantamount to salvation.

In fact, nuclear weapons have not turned out to be the "ultimate challenge" they were conceived to be. Today they are, of course, vastly more destructive than when Elliot Cohen wrote. Obviously these weapons and the development of accurate modes of delivery have rendered war terribly dangerous and destructive. A nuclear war would wreak devastation of inestimable extent and duration. Obviously, the greatest prudence is required in dealing with this terribly dangerous weapon. But fear of nuclear weapons has traumatized us and, I believe, distorted our perception of the dangers which surround us. It has led to an overemphasis on nuclear arms control as a centerpiece of foreign policy.

A nuclear war would be horrible beyond imagination, but other kinds of weapons—chemical, biological, electronic—of great destructiveness are also being developed. Our potential adversaries have a large advantage in these fields, too.

Chemical weapons are a real and present danger. They have actually been used in the last decade, by the Soviets in Afghanistan, by the Vietnamese against the Hmong people, and by both sides in the Iran/Iraq war. Chemical weapons are cheap, their components are readily procured, easily assembled and delivered. No sophisticated technology is required. Their effects may prove extremely difficult to control or contain. More deadly chemical and biological agents are in the works. Little public note is taken of their dangers in spite of clear indications that the Soviets, at least, regard chemical agents as part of their operational arsenal.

Beyond nuclear and chemical war lies conventional slaughter. In the forty years since Hiroshima, there have been over forty wars in which more than ten million persons have been killed by very conventional weapons.

THEN there is totalitarianism. Millions more have perished as victims of totalitarian governments than died in Hiroshima. The United States and the West have done far less well containing totalitarianism than in controlling the danger of nuclear war. There has been no nuclear war but more than a dozen countries have succumbed to ruling elites with totalitarian aspirations. The human consequences have been devastating. Millions have perished in purges, Gulags, and man-made famines without monuments, without marches, without international campaigns, without notice or sympathy. The number of such governments continues to grow. Why are there more anniversary vigils to the victims of Hiroshima than to victims of totalitarian governments? Why are more Western fears focused now on nuclear weapons than on the spread of totalitarianism? Why are so many of those most concerned about nuclear war among those least concerned about the spread of totalitarianism? What are the people who worry about nuclear war, but not about totalitarianism, actually worried about?

Elliot Cohen had the realism to understand that the murder of citizens by their governments constitued "a force that, in the political and social scene, can wreak destruction comparable to the atomic bomb itself." To perceive this danger only realism was required. No foresight was needed to understand the destructive potential of a murderous government. The experience of the Holocaust was just behind us. But this is a dangerous violent century in which we have great difficulty learning from experience.

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Joseph Kraft: A spectacular success story with an unhappy ending is what I perceive looking back over the last forty years.

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—to use Jefferson's more succinct formulation of Elliot Cohen's categories—were all richly enhanced during the first two decades. Around 1965 the consensus born of World War II and its immediate aftermath fell apart. Perhaps the mere passage of time destroyed a cohesion that was exceptional in lasting so long. But there was also a cultural revolution—evident in television, music, and drugs—which fragmented sensibility and wiped out history as a widely accepted flow of unfolding events. A tumult of grasping self-promotion rose in all quarters. Amidst this tumult, ideological voices, on Right and Left, posed a genuine threat to the reality—not to mention the perception—of sustained headway.

"LIFE" in the nuclear age has come to mean preserving the planet. But the danger of extinction became real only about a quarter-century after Hiroshima. The American monopoly, and then this country's overwhelming superiority, provided insurance against a general holocaust. Even the supposed threats—by Eisenhower to end the Korean war and by Kennedy in the Cuban-missile crisis—do not bear scrutiny as close brushes with apocalypse. The Russians, and their proxies, simply climbed down.

Since about 1970 there has been "rough parity" between the two superpowers in nuclear weapons. The mutual capacity to inflict terrible damage was recognized and codified in the ABM treaty of 1972. By drastically limiting anti-ballistic missiles,

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each side made its own population hostage to the other. Even today, the nuclear balance remains, through many marginal changes, relatively stable. The deterrent deters.

On both Left and Right, however, a tolerable if imperfect balance was shattered by exaggeration and misrepresentation. The Left invented scenarios for wiping out mankind by accident, or through the madness of insane scientists or power-mad generals. These chimeras gave birth to the freeze movement, and to the drive for no-first-use. Jimmy Carter, feeding on these illusions, convinced himself that the great obstacle to more arms control was a lack of moral fervor on the American side. He declared that belief publicly, and then raised further suspicions of being "soft" on the Russians by invoking "human rights" against faithful allies while cancelling projected weapons systems, notably the neutron bomb. By the time he had struck a bargain with Brezhnev, he had jeopardized the majority necessary for ratification in the Senate. Even the sudden toughening, implicit in the decision to build the MX missile and to deploy intermediate-range missiles in Europe, could not save SALT II.

The Right, for its part, overstated enormously the degree to which the U.S. lagged behind the Russians in deterrent power. It manufactured the "window of vulnerability" which supposedly left the U.S. land-based deterrent exposed to a Soviet first strike. President Reagan and his closest supporters half-believed this rubbish and embarked upon an incoherent defense build-up which ran out of support as soon as budgetary stringency asserted itself. But they exposed the hollowness of their position by turning it to opposite uses for partisan purposes in the matter of the MX. When right-wing Senators from Nevada and Utah expressed fear that the missile would attract Soviet first strikes, President Reagan cancelled the plan to hide the MX in movable bases in the Western desert. But then, as though the life of the country depended upon it, he stuck with a version of the weapon that was immobile and hence highly vulnerable.

For several years, President Reagan had no substitute for SALT II. He observed its terms even though, in leading the successful fight against ratification, he had called it "fatally flawed." But under pressure from the freeze movement, he came up with his own recipe for making nuclear weapons "obsolete"—the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) for an anti-ballistic-missile defense.

The basic elements of a Big Two bargain on arms control remain in place. If both superpowers agree to limit ballistic-missile defense to research and equally undertake substantial reductions in offensive weapons, SALT II, or perhaps SALT 2.5, would be at hand. But the Russians would first have to renounce their missile-defense plans, and President Reagan would have to come off SDI. Having been sold on it as a way to end the horror of nuclear war, the President will not be easy to de-bamboozle. Otherwise, though, there will be no agreement. The Russians, facing a combination of American defensive superiority and extremely powerful offensive weapons, would feel constrained to begin any nuclear engagement by going for everything at once. What has been, on both sides, a policy of selective deterrence, could escalate into that bogey, Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). The Left and Right will have talked us into making MAD a reality.

THE FIGHTING of limited war has been altered dramatically by the achievement of nuclear parity. While the U.S. held a monopoly or crushing superiority, the use of nuclear weapons could be threatened as an ultimate equalizer. The heart of European defense from 1945 through 1978 was nuclear retaliation, and "the bomb" was implicitly brandished by Eisenhower during the Korean war and by Kennedy in the Cuban-missile crisis. But as Russia acquired the capacity for devastating this country, the nuclear threat lost its potency. Whatever officials may have thought, public opinion, in the form of such self-inhibiting movements as no-first-use and the freeze, edged the use of nuclear weapons increasingly out of bounds. The constraint became evident in 1982, when the then Secretary of State Alexander Haig declared that there was an allied plan, in the event of a Soviet attack on Europe, to explode a nuclear weapon in the atmosphere as a warning. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger declared there was no such accord. In English that meant there was no agreement for the use of nuclear weapons even in Europe.

The allies could put up a respectable defense in Western Europe—provided they were prepared to spend the money. But in the Third World, American fear of nuclear retaliation prevents a win strategy. In dealing with Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the U.S. has now condemned itself to an imperfect defense. Vietnam and Nicaragua are not the result of betrayal or weakness. In most of the Third World the best the U.S. can achieve is what diplomacy can extract from local power balances. What Daniel Bell called "the end of American exceptionalism" is a strategic reality. The U.S. has become a power *comme les autres.*

The Middle East registers that condition in a tragic way. Superior skill and motivation gave Israel the upper hand over its Arab adversaries through 1970. The U.S. virtually dictated the terms of the truce agreements ending the 1956 and 1967 wars. The 1973 war yielded neither winners nor losers. By restraining the Israelis, and surrendering to the Arabs on oil pricing, Henry Kissinger reaped some slight benefits for American influence in the area. In 1982, after early military success in Lebanon, the Israelis lost heart. The U.S. played a restraining role but reaped no diplomatic fruits. Indeed, the subsequent withdrawal of the American forces

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in Lebanon reflects a waning of U.S. influence in the Middle East, and probably the Third World as a whole.

"Liberty," the second category, is, of course, closely related to defense. From the beginning of time, tribes, cities, dynasties, and nations unable to defend themselves have lost their freedom. Nobody needs to cite Munich to preach that lesson, and those who do are almost always engaged in special pleading.

The postwar settlement incorporated a European balance of power repeatedly tested and proved during, before, and after the event. The Western democracies, led by the U.S., are not prepared to die for Danzig or any other part of East-Central Europe. The Soviets are. So for practical purposes, Yalta and Potsdam consigned Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Bulgaria to the Soviet sphere of influence. The trick is to make the Russians abandon the stupid judgment that every change in every local official in the area is a threat to their security.

Scope for liberty in Eastern Europe gains from an easing of military and economic pressure, and an increase in commercial and cultural exchange. Western pressure puts local leaders in a corner. By yielding they risk everything. Since the West is not prepared to intervene with force, Communist toughness pays off. Thus, fears that the local Communist leadership might lose control over security brought Soviet intervention in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. As for economic pressures, sanctions only advertise impotence. In the four years since sanctions were applied against Poland, General Jaruzelski has virtually crushed Solidarity. In contrast, Solidarity and other movements for greater independence and liberty flowered during the period when détente with Moscow was the official policy in Washington. The choice, to be sure, is a melancholy one. But the fiction that there is a clear Western option between fostering freedom or tyranny in Eastern Europe does not help. It is not for Westerners who care about liberty to make life more miserable than it has to be in Eastern Europe.

For the rest of the world, the American record seems reasonably good. Despite repeated alarms, particularly in the McCarthy period, liberty in this country has not been put in serious jeopardy at any time since 1945. Television, the press, magazines, and all kinds of specialized publications and meetings offer a rich—maybe even over-rich—diet of opinion and information. Notable gains have been registered in achieving equality of racial opportunity; practically no one now contests the principle; those who contest the practice do it in the name of more perfect equality.

Thanks in large measure to American support, two strongholds of autocracy have become vibrant, democratic states. In Japan and West Germany opinion is free, regular elections take place, plutocracy is curbed, and extremists are fenced out. Spain and Portugal have also, after years of authoritarian rule, started down the road to stable democracy. Ties to this country, and to such institutions as the European Economic Community and the North Atlantic Alliance, favor a successful outcome.

Independence has turned out to be less of a blessing than advertised in Africa and parts of Asia. Still, it is what most of the native populations sought, and what enlightened opinion in this country believed was only just. Colonial rule has been ended in large parts of Asia (notably India, Pakistan, and Indonesia) and Africa. The American role in fostering the change was considerable, and American power has worked—and still works—to limit the convulsions associated with the birth of nations. A case, little recognized but important as a possible model, is India. During the terrible food shortages of 1965-66, this country launched the largest ever emergency food-aid program. Lyndon Johnson made the help conditional on price reform, and a modicum of population control. The emergence of an Indian economy, able to feed itself and export manufactured goods, started then.

Latin America offers a fertile field for the play of rival American ideologies. The Left stresses direct promotion of democracy and "human rights." The Right arms *contras* against Marxism-Leninism. But this ideological warfare only serves to blind Americans to the larger realities.

A steady expansion of trade, largely under American impulse, provided breathing room for political reform through much of Latin America in the immediate postwar period. The advent of Castro signaled the danger of reform tipping over into Communist rule. The Kennedy administration, in the Alliance for Progress, plunged forward with a policy deliberately aimed at fostering democracy. But the new leaders who emerged proved unable to cope with the worldwide inflation that gathered force as the Vietnam war deepened. The specter of economic chaos brought the military to power in country after country. The disinflation ordained by the Federal Reserve Board after the second great oil-price rise in 1979 threw up new sets of economic problems which the soldiers could not handle. Hence the recent return to civilian leadership in so many Latin American nations, including Argentina and Brazil. Iron dictatorship, indeed, exists only where a strong man has established highly personal control. But the new democracies elsewhere in Latin America depend on the level of U.S. imports and the rise and fall in interest rates. In shaping political trends south of the border, as in most of the Third World, the U.S. factor that counts most is economic policy.

Economic policy, or the "pursuit of happiness," in fact provides the central theme of the whole postwar period. The cataclysmic economic failure

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which blighted most of the world in the 1930's presents the point of departure for judgment. Global depression of that sort has been made to seem a period piece. Living standards in the developed world have been increased many times over. The U.S., Canada, Western Europe, and Japan have—in their central banks and welfare systems—tools to avert crash and smooth out cycles. Several of the most important underdeveloped countries—India, Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, for example—have latched onto the international machinery of growth. In different ways the most important Communist countries—Russia and China—are also trying to plug into the same system. Even countries that have done everything wrong in economic management do not go under. The Ethiopias of this world get bailed out.

The American role in fostering this breathtaking advance is itself breathtaking. This country furnished most of the resources for the postwar recovery of Western Europe and Japan. It led the way in developing institutions of multinational economic cooperation. It provided one political model for the mixed system whereby government joined hands with business and labor to achieve both growth and security. It contributed importantly to the theoretical framework for measuring and managing national economies. It broke much of the new ground in scientific and technological innovation. Most importantly, Americans brought buoyancy where there had been despair. The spirit of the postwar economy is essentially American.

By the middle of the 1960's, however, overconfidence began to show. Sober neo-Keynesians declared the end of the business cycle. "The performance of capitalism," Andrew Shonfeld wrote of North America and Western Europe in 1965, "has been unexpectedly dazzling." In this heady atmosphere, new and almost limitless claims on the American economy were staked by various groups. Business, labor, and consumers sought larger shares of the pie. Minorities and women increased their demands. Ecology and education put in bids. Vietnam drove defense spending higher. By the early 70's the strain was beginning to tell.

In 1971, the U.S. shut down the gold window, applied a surcharge on imports, and twice devalued the dollar before agreeing on a system of floating exchange rates. The oil shock of 1973 added a new tax to the economy. The Carter administration, in its first three years, demonstrated that the usual efforts to gun the economy only drained off in higher inflation. By 1979, new appointments to head the Treasury and the Federal Reserve Board showed that doubts about the American economy had spread from the outside world to the center of government. The rock of postwar achievements had cracked. The American Center had lost its self-assurance. As confidence waned, crackpots on the fringes gained legitimacy and stature. With the mixed approach to policy discredited, "purer systems" took hold. The ground was prepared for the triumph of ideology.

By 1980, rival ideologues dominated the two political parties. Jimmy Carter ran as the candidate of those who sought help from an activist government—labor, minorities, poor people, and the environmentalists. Ronald Reagan was the candidate of those who identified government as "the problem," and his victory put the exponents of private power in the political saddle. Rich companies and individuals were favored by tax reduction, defense spending, and deregulation. The Federal Reserve Board was encouraged to compress inflation by restricting the money supply. Special advantages accorded minorities, poor people, students, and the ailing were curtailed. Recession was followed by high unemployment which cut down rising labor costs. Though economic activity bounced back strongly in 1983-84, the federal revenue base had been shattered.

Now the economy is on uncharted seas—bloated deficits in a time of prosperity; unusually high real interest rates; an overvalued dollar; record imbalances in foreign trade; and stagnation of the sectors most sensitive to foreign competition—agriculture and manufacturing. Rampant deregulation, the mindless response to rapid innovation, has fostered in every corner of American business a restructuring which features a reduction of equity and a rise in debt. Perhaps everything will self-correct. But a new departure in economic policy seems to be indicated. The avoidance of a crash that has been the special success of the postwar period is no longer assured.

SOME of the change marking the last twenty years of the postwar period was bound to occur. The spirit of fellowship and sacrifice engendered by World War II and the Soviet challenge faded with time. Enthusiasm for public goals gave way to private advancement. As the quality of followership declined, so did the quality of leadership. Even now almost everything Richard Nixon says recalls a cautionary verse of Hilaire Belloc:

It is not true
And if it were true it would not do.

The major achievement of the last three Presidents was replacing the one who came before. Otherwise escaping consequences seems to be the chief demand placed upon leadership. Much as Reagan plays opposite parts—one day General Custer, the next day Sitting Bull—as if nothing had happened, so Carter used religiosity to evade the structure of events. But those personal styles of leadership are merely responses to the national psychology. The country itself seeks something for nothing. It wants better conditions, but shrinks from paying the price in blood or money.

More than mere time, and the passage of an atmosphere of emergency, I suspect, is responsible for the change in mood. The cultural revolution

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generated by the overconfidence of the mid-60's features an approach to life that seems new in the world. The prevalence of drugs, with the deliberate separation of feeling from reality, is one element. A second is the emergence of rock music—with its incantations, its sexuality, and its idols—as the popular form of religion. Finally there is the rise of television as the dominant form of mass communication. What all three have in common is a hectic, fitful quality. They make noise in bursts, and flash disconnected images.

The sense of the past, in these conditions, undergoes radical change. The velocity of events accelerates. A feel for one development leading to the next in some recognizable pattern is obliterated. Instead, discrete things just happen. Nothing endures or seems especially important, and distance fades rapidly. Life takes on an episodic quality. History becomes a series of flashbacks.

Discontinuity of experience fosters resilience. Far better than most other countries the U.S. adjusts to change, and the recent recovery of nerve has been exhilarating. But if a radical cultural break did take place two decades ago, then what has happened since 1965 is no mere return to normalcy after a period of extraordinary achievement. It is not just a brief time-out after a season of killing exertion. It represents a genuine turn of the wheel. The remarkably benign American predominance in the world has entered the beginning of a long afternoon.

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Irving Kristol: When the first issue of COMMENTARY appeared, I was an enlisted man in the U.S. Army, newly-arrived in Marseilles from Germany, where I had been awaiting being shipped to the Far East. (The atomic bomb, to my relief—and I recall having no reaction to this "dawn of a new era" other than relief—had nullified that prospect.) I did not see my first issue of COMMMENTARY until a year later. Had I read the opening editorial, with its reference to "the glorious era of peace which we have awaited so long," I would have dismissed it as rhetorical fluff. That was not the way I felt about the era that awaited me. It was not the way my fellow GI's felt. And when I returned home a year later it was not—as best I could determine—the way anyone felt. In 1945-46, after ten years of depression and almost four years of war, Americans were an anxious people. No one I knew was optimistic about the nation's future.

One forgets that most of our experts and editorial writers were then convinced that the feverish activity of our war economy would be succeeded by a continuation of the depression. There was no talk, in those days, about "economic growth." (The official statistics for our gross national product didn't even exist.) Millions of men and women were being demobilized. Other millions were losing their jobs as war plants closed down. It was widely predicted that the booming city of Los Angeles, a favorite area for war industry, was on its way to reverting to a collection of film studios. The need for massive "economic planning" to avert economic chaos was generally accepted. *No one* was saying that prosperity was just around the corner—though, ironically, it was.

So, looking back, we have reason to be proud of the extraordinary economic achievements of the American democracy in the past four decades. "Extraordinary" even understates the case. Had anyone in 1945 dared to envisage the actual economic future, he would have been dismissed as a foolish fantasist. My former teacher, Lewis Feuer, once went back to the musty radical and "progressive" literature of the 1930's when men like Stuart Chase and Lewis Corey and Bruce Bliven and Norman Thomas were publishing forecasts of how affluent the United States could be if only we had a rationally planned economy. In every respect, these forecasts fell far short of what our unplanned economy did achieve in the postwar years. True, it is also the case that these four decades of marvelous economic growth did not produce the kind of glowing contentment that they were supposed to. But this only demonstrates that the relation between economic growth and human happiness (or even social and political stability) is a lot more complex than most of us—under the influence either of vulgar Marxist or simple-minded capitalist thinking—had been led to believe.

SIMILARLY, the progress over these decades in what the American Jewish Committee delicately calls "intergroup relations" has been nothing short of remarkable. It was impossible in those early years to be a Jew in the armed services and not encounter widespread, even rabid, anti-Semitism. It was impossible then to be a Jew in America, looking for a job or a career, without encountering a near-solid wall of discrimination. Medical schools had strict quotas for Jews. Jewish college graduates found that they were probably wasting their time seeking employment in banks, insurance companies, public utilities, indeed in most major corporations. They drifted into the public sector, or to Jewish-owned firms, or became entrepreneurs themselves. Even academia was less than hospitable. The Holocaust was not something that most Americans thought worthy of their interest. Organizations like the American Jewish Committee or the Anti-Defamation League were girding up for a new upsurge of anti-Semitism, which they confidently anticipated. Yet these four decades have probably been more agreeable to the American Jewish community than to any other Jewish community, anywhere, at any time in history. The American Jewish community of the 1980's is eco-

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nomically secure beyond yesteryear's dreams of affluence. It is politically influential. It is prominently represented in all the arts and sciences. A "golden age," truly! Today intermarriage is seen as a much greater threat to Jewish survival than anti-Semitism. Well, that's the price you pay when the going is good.

And, as a bonus, there came the state of Israel to serve as a focus—too much so, some would claim—for Jewish identity. I say a "bonus" because in 1945 it was unclear that there ever would be such a state, or that it could possibly survive. In its first years, COMMENTARY was very skeptical of the viability—and, therefore, the desirability—of any such state. In this, it reflected the cast of mind then dominant in the American Jewish Committee and among most Jewish intellectuals. Well do I remember, as a member of Elliot Cohen's staff, editing an article by the brilliant Hannah Arendt in which she demonstrated, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a state of Israel could not survive too many months against Arab power. In blithe disregard of her intellectual authority, it did, and does. Can any period in which a state of Israel is reestablished, after almost two millennia, be anything but a "golden age"?

ONE cannot honestly say that it has been any kind of "golden age" for American blacks—but neither can one deny the extraordinary economic, legal, and political progress that these four decades did witness. In 1945, ours was a segregated society—segregated by law and regulation sometimes, by custom and tradition always and everywhere. The armed services were segregated. Neighborhoods were universally segregated, schools almost always so. Professional sports were "lily-white." So were most amateur sports: I do not recall seeing a single black player on either my high-school or college football or basketball teams—and these were free, public schools. A black middle class did exist, but it was so small and segregated as to be practically invisible. In those days, the idea that hundreds of thousands of University of Alabama football fans, overwhelmingly white, would be wildly rooting for "their" black players was unimaginable. The thought that, in four decades, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Birmingham (Birmingham!) would have black mayors was—well, unthinkable.

Black legal and political equality was achieved, for the most part quite peacefully if not easily, in those four decades. By any reasonable historical standard, that is *rapid* progress. Those who believe that even instant solutions to our domestic problems are a mite too slow—they should have been accomplished yesteryear—will not think so, but it is precisely those people who are "a social problem" for us. Black economic progress, to be sure, though substantial, has been much less satisfactory. We had assumed that the advent of legal and political equality for blacks would more or less automatically, if not instantly, move them into the "mainstream" of American economic life. This has indeed been the experience of perhaps one-half the black community—but not of the other half. Since we don't know why this bifurcation has occurred, and don't know quite what to do about it, this unanticipated and disagreeable condition represents no kind of "indictment" of American society. It is a problem we still have to cope with—along with many other problems, old and new. Only those Americans who pursue the utopian vision of a non-problematic society will convert all such problems into "indictments."

ALL in all, then, in the past forty years Americans have lived through a period that any fair-minded historian would describe as one of significant economic and social progress, as these terms are conventionally used. The trouble, however, lies precisely in the conventional use of these terms. They are part of a "progressive" vocabulary that rests on hidden assumptions. The major assumption is—and always has been—that improvement in economic and social conditions, as statistically measured, will make people more contented, more law-abiding, even "happier." But improving the housing conditions of people, we have learned, does not necessarily make those people "better off" in a larger, more human sense; it doesn't even necessarily make them *feel* better off. Certainly no one—whether liberal or conservative—would have dared predict, forty years ago, that the improvement in our economic and social circumstances would be accompanied by a massive, harrowing increase in crime, drug addiction, family disintegration, sexual promiscuity and illegitimacy among teen-agers, rampant homosexuality, and widespread pornography. Something clearly has gone wrong.

Just what has gone wrong we find it very hard to comprehend. If one were a classical reactionary (of the T.S. Eliot type, say), one might indeed have a ready explanation: modern, affluent mass democracies are doomed to such "corruption" and "decadence" because "it is in their very nature"—i.e., because the people, when given such economic security, such cultural freedom and political power, will only abuse it to the verge of self-destruction. I believe this explanation, despite its superficial plausibility, to be fundamentally false. Its falsity is revealed by the fact that the overwhelming majority of the American people are profoundly unhappy and much agitated over the trends they are caught up in. Their problem is that they don't really know what to do about it, and so strike out wildly against the evils they correctly perceive to be invading and often destroying their lives.

I do think, however, that the classical reactionary has an important point, only it is misplaced. It is not mass democracy that makes modern societies less habitable than anticipated, it is secular,

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"progressive" liberalism—in its modern version, anyhow—that exacerbates our social problems, while creating a spiritual and moral void in which they proliferate as so many cancers. This secular liberalism is the religion of our elites—in academia, in our educational establishments, in our media, in our arts—but *not* the religion of a majority of the American people. This majority finds itself imprisoned within a culture (including a political-judicial culture) that disenfranchises its moral and religious sensibilities.

This is the problem we inherit from our quite successful four decades of economic growth and social reform. Yes, I know that our pollsters and our political savants keep informing us that "social issues" really do not carry all that much political weight in elections, and that people vote their pocketbooks, as they always have. True enough, but such conventional wisdom—itself but an aspect of secular liberalism—is reaching its limit. In my opinion, unless a modern conservatism emerges that can successfully cope with the distressful human condition in America today, as experienced by the majority of Americans, we could easily be in for a very nasty right-wing explosion. After all, dynamic economies do have their inevitable ups and downs, and it is possible that, one of these days, the American people will "vote their pocketbooks" in such a way as to coincide with their exasperation over the failure of secular liberalism to provide them with a decent, acceptable way of life.

In foreign policy, too, we find liberalism, after four decades, at the end of its tether. Moreover, its record over this period is—shall we say?—less than inspiriting.

One doesn't wish to exaggerate, and it would certainly be a wild exaggeration to say that our record in foreign policy since World War II has been one of unmitigated disaster. The strategy of "containment" of Soviet expansion in Europe, as practiced by the United States and its allies, has largely worked. In addition, we have benefited enormously from the fact that all Communist economies are demonstrable failures and also from gross Soviet errors that have, among other things, created a class of Communist but anti-Soviet nations (China, Yugoslavia)—a class that, one may hope, will recruit new members in the future (Cuba?). Indeed, if any American diplomat had, immediately after World War II, been given a description of the world in 1985, he would have had no cause to be very disconcerted, though one suspects he would have been mildly disappointed, especially at the political and economic chaos that ravages the so-called Third World.

Still, there have been three major and costly mistakes in American foreign policy over these decades. They are: Yalta, Suez, and Vietnam. Had it not been for the Yalta agreement, our troops could have moved to secure at least portions of what is now called "Eastern Europe" (it used to be called Central Europe, it has been noted sadly) before their occupation by Soviet troops. Had it not been for our action at the time of Suez, some kind of international force could have been occupying the Suez isthmus since 1956, thereby averting the 1967 and 1973 Israeli-Arab wars, with their complicating consequences. And had it not been for the ineffectual mode of our intervention in Vietnam—"graduated response," it was solemnly called—we would not have experienced almost two decades of mass disorientation about the very legitimacy of any American foreign policy.

All three mistakes were rooted in our liberal-legalistic view of the world that is incarnated in such an institution as the United Nations. It is a view that has dominated American foreign policy since World War II and still dominates it today, if slightly less dogmatically. This view defines the purpose of American foreign policy as the creation of a "world community" living peaceably under international law, with sanctions against lawbreakers being exercised by an appropriate international organization. This is a splendid goal, but it really cannot be the purpose of anyone's foreign policy since two crucial factors are absent: (1) there is no such "world community" because there is no serious commitment to law-abidingness on the part of the nations that are supposed to be the citizens of this world community; and (2) there is no international organization with the will to enforce international law in an impartial way.

Nationalism and national interest are still sovereign in international affairs. To complicate matters still further, one of the world's "superpowers," the Soviet Union, has wedded its nationalism to a messianic ideology that vastly enlarges its own conception of its "national interest." This ideology is uncompromisingly hostile to the public philosophy of all "bourgeois" democracies and seeks to impose itself wherever political and social turbulence offers an opportunity to do so.

Given its liberal-internationalist posture, the United States has been inept at the practice of both *Realpolitik* and ideological confrontation. The sins of omission outnumber and are more significant than the sins of commission—it's not just the wrong things we have done but the more numerous right and effective things it never occurred to us to do. We flounder, defending an impossible ideal of international order while permitting the initiative to be the permanent privilege of others, and most especially of our declared enemies. With considerable effort, and with the benefit of our enemies' incompetence, we struggle, often successfully, for a tied score. But in politics as in competitive sports, those who play for a tie will most likely, over time, end by losing.

It is my sense that the American people—as distinct from our elites in academia, the media, the foreign-policy establishment—feel that we are at

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the end of the line so far as a liberal-internationalist foreign policy is concerned. Ours is a competitive, entrepreneurial society, not by nature risk-aversive. Americans usually play to win, not for any kind of gentlemanly pleasure in the sport itself. Since 1945, the United States has fought two bloody wars in the name of "resisting aggression." The first (Korea) ended in a stalemate, the second (Vietnam) in defeat. I doubt very much that the American people have the least enthusiasm for rallying around that banner once again. They are far more likely to make it clear that, henceforth, they wish to see America "going for the gold."

Any such reorientation of American foreign policy will be stressful, to put it mildly. A more assertive, "unilateralist," interventionist posture in foreign policy will require a newly-defined set of relations with our allies, the neutral nations, the neutralist nations, our ideological opponents, the United Nations, etc. To be sure, in a nuclear age any such foreign policy of "affirmative action" will have to be tempered with prudential considerations. But, then, a sensible foreign policy is always so tempered.

In any case, the truth is that however one sums up the relative successes and failures of American foreign policy in these past forty years, it is yesteryear's balance sheet we are talking about. Historians may wish to study it, but policy-makers are more likely to think of themselves as engaged in a new enterprise, with a new set of books to keep.

I FIND that I have little of substance to say about the way the United States has managed the question of nuclear armaments. I have always been attracted to a unilateral declaration of no-first-use of our nuclear weapons, accompanied by a massive (and expensive) build-up of our conventional forces. I do think that, if this issue had been candidly presented to the American people and to the people of the Western democracies, they might well have found merit in such a strategy. At the least, it would have reassured them that their government *cared* about the awful prospect of a nuclear war—cared, moreover, in a non-appeasing way.

However, I also have to concede that, even if this choice had been made, or were made today, it probably wouldn't matter that much. The nuclear arms race would be unaffected, since the major powers would still feel the need for a credible retaliatory force as a deterrent, regardless of paper promises. So far as the United States is concerned, we already have an unofficial doctrine of no-first-use against non-nuclear powers. (If we didn't use nuclear weapons in Vietnam, where would we use them?) And as concerns the two "superpowers," it is hard to imagine a major conflict between them that would not eventually result in the use of nuclear weapons, if only of the tactical, battlefield variety. The Soviet Union, it should be noted, does have a doctrine of no-first-use, but its divisions are all very thoroughly equipped for waging nuclear warfare. No one can possibly believe the Soviets would disarm these divisions because of any promise we made.

BE that as it may, the liberal consensus of the past decades, in both domestic and foreign affairs, has exhausted its energy and its potential. So it is easy to predict—at least I find it easy to predict!—that some kind of nonliberal, and presumably conservative, consensus will gradually emerge. (I exclude the possibility of a new left-wing consensus simply because Americans are the kind of people they are, and America is the kind of country it is.) Just what the specific features of any such new consensus will be, it is hard to forecast. But it seems to me that in all the Western democracies—indeed, in practically all nations, everywhere—such a consensus will be erected on three pillars:

1. There will be a commitment to economic growth, as measured by jobs and economic opportunity for the average person. This is a *sine qua non* of successful government in a modern society. Our cultural and intellectual elites might be philosophically troubled about the larger implications of such a commitment. But unless they are determined to live on the margins of politics (not such a bad idea, perhaps), they will have to come to terms with it.

2. The new consensus will be nationalist and more intensely patriotic than sophisticated and cosmopolitan persons might like. The 20th century was supposed to witness the supersession of 19th-century nationalism by a more benign and "global" vision. It has not worked out that way. Nationalism is still the strongest force in the world and evidently will remain so for as far ahead as one can see. If American teen-agers insist on converting Bruce Springsteen into a patriotic pop singer, despite his best efforts to the contrary, one is obviously at the mercy of a power that will not be denied.

3. There will be an explicit emphasis on the moral values associated with traditional religious teachings—and probably on religious observance as well. All that liberalism can offer young people is a choice from a whole spectrum of values and ways of life, all "objectively" considered. Such sophisticated "consumerism" is a psychological, sociological, and political absurdity. Youngsters don't want it—it gives them an "identity crisis"; parents will not for long tolerate it. It is the historical role of religion to provide authoritative values—so authoritative that you don't even have to be religious to accept them. No society, not even our liberal, individualistic democracies, can dispense with a religious fundament, however amorphous and eclectic.

There will be many who will be acutely depressed at the thought of any such shape-of-things-to-come. I myself am not absolutely certain that, were I around, I'd like it all that much. But the

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dissolution of a sovereign liberal ideology is now well under way, and rather than sterile lamentations one ought to be thinking along the lines of a positive reconstruction.

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Walter Laqueur: In 1945 the hopes for a "glorious era of peace" were unrealistic, and for this reason I believe that we could be doing even worse. A democracy like the United States can never exhibit a "giant's strength" in peacetime; Elliot Cohen must have known this, hence his troubled and hesitant thoughts. History is seldom a story of adequate responses to great ("historical") challenges; it is a mixture of successes, failures, and just muddling through. To ask for more is to ignore past experience. I cannot think of any period in the history of America—or any other country—with such high expectations. There was a tendency in 1945 to exaggerate the "giant's strength" demonstrated by the U.S. in World War II. Psychologically, such pride was understandable and as far as the production of armaments went, the American performance was certainly colossal. But with regard to planning, cooperation, and courage, the record of the U.S. was no more outstanding than that of other belligerents. Seen in retrospect, the great surprise was not the eventual victory of the Allied powers but the extent of the German and Japanese victories in the early years of the war, and the fact that it took the Allies with their vastly superior resources four years to defeat the Axis.

The hopes for close postwar cooperation with the Soviet Union and the newly emerging Third World gave way to gradual disillusionment. Since then, by and large, a more or less realistic assessment of the state of the world has prevailed with, of course, inevitable relapses into wishful thinking. Needless to say, there has been no consistent strategy in the postwar era. The unfortunate necessity to maintain deterrence was reluctantly accepted. But while deterrence has prevented a world war, it has not been of use in all the situations which America has faced, from Vietnam to Beirut and Teheran.

I have no doubt that a more effective American policy could have been followed. In some instances we should have refrained from intervening, in others we should have intervened much more decisively. In certain cases Soviet expansion could have been contained, elsewhere conflicts might have been resolved. It is easy to find scapegoats—the lack of continuity in Washington with the frequent changes in administration; the quality of the statesmen; the lack of an overall strategy; insufficient or misleading information supplied by the media, with inevitable consequences so far as public opinion is concerned. But I am not at all certain whether the overall outcome would have been radically different even if ideal conditions had prevailed—if U.S. policy had been consistent, crystal-clear, far-sighted, based on a wide popular consensus, and carried out by foreign-policy practitioners of the highest caliber. The Soviet system would still exist; the Third World would have developed internally and externally according to its own laws and not in the image of Western democracies; Europe would still not be united; Latin America would still face its major internal problems and be antagonistic to its powerful neighbor to the north; the United Nations would be no more effective an instrument to preserve peace.

In other words, the possibilities for America to bring about changes in other parts of the world were far more restricted than Elliot Cohen (and most others) believed in 1945. An active, successful foreign policy conducted by a democratic society seems to be a contradiction in terms in the modern world. Foreign policy is still an elite preoccupation, the interest of the great majority of the population in global affairs is very limited, except, of course, in a major crisis. Technically it is now possible to convey the importance and urgency of events in foreign lands to the homes of hundreds of millions of people. But by its very nature television focuses on the sensational, which has considerable entertainment value, rather than on truly important issues which frequently happen to be quite boring or cannot be shown on the small screen. How can one prepare an exciting program on the global debt crisis, for example?

I HAVE never shared the concern of some of my friends about the likelihood of an all-out Soviet military attack. The main problem in our relations with the Soviet bloc has been political rather than military, provided always that we do not invite an attack by falling behind too much in military preparedness. Unfortunately, far too much thought has been given in our public debates to recondite questions concerning the use of hardware and far too little to the real political problems facing America in its relations with friends and foes alike. Perhaps this is only natural because America has traditionally been more at ease in the field of technology than in the maze of world politics. But only seldom are there technological answers to political problems.

We have successfully avoided a nuclear war, indeed any global war, for four decades, and I am reasonably optimistic that this will also be the case in the future. I am less optimistic about the use of nuclear weapons by other countries as a re-

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sult of nuclear proliferation; I do not think, however, that a local war in which nuclear weapons are used will necessarily lead to global disaster. The question of banning weapons of mass destruction has bothered me as much as anyone else, but like everyone else I do not know how we can disinvent these weapons. Arms control has so far offered only pseudo-solutions. Even the establishment of a world state would not be the answer because as technology makes further progress, there is no guarantee that such weapons would not be used in an internal war within the framework of a world state. It is one of the tragedies of our time that there has been no agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union on the one problem on which they have a clear common interest, namely, the prevention of nuclear proliferation. If past experience teaches us anything, it is that a new impulse for bringing nuclear weapons under some form of control will come only after a disaster has occurred, most likely in a local war in the Third World.

MEASURED by the tremendous expectations of 1945, the record of the past four decades has been one of dismal failure. But those who did not share these high hopes cannot feel too dejected now. I think that a new agenda drawn up now for the years ahead—say, up to the turn of the century—would to some extent emphasize different issues. The main dangers to world peace will come from the disorder endemic in parts of the Third World rather than from any direct conflict between the two superpowers. In an even longer perspective, the main problems could well be economic and demographic in character. Soviet military power is greater than ever before, but the system itself is frozen, and a return to full-scale Stalinism is as unlikely as is genuine democratization. Unlike Jean-François Revel, I fail to see the existence of the "totalitarian temptation." Even under Stalin the Soviet system had greater ideological attraction than it does now. The danger is not of ideological fascination but of unendurable boredom; soon there may be no one left willing to pay attention to events in the Soviet Union, and the rest of the world might mistakenly conclude that since developments there are so uninspiring, they are also unimportant. I doubt that the great thaw periodically predicted since the 1950's will in fact take place in our time and this means that the Soviet Union's East European allies will have to wait a considerable time to achieve more freedom and independence.

The importance of Western Europe in world affairs will further decline because it cannot get its act together. NATO will be in jeopardy but not because of neutralist trends among British Labor, German Social Democrats, the Dutch, and the Scandinavians who in the decisive moment will always shrink back; if NATO falls apart, it will be, rather, as a result of the Americans losing patience with their European allies. But somehow a guardian angel seems to protect Europe from committing irreversible acts of foolishness. The decline of Europe is slow and gradual; a sudden, dramatic collapse seems most unlikely.

THE great massacres in our time to which Elliot Cohen referred have taken place in Third World countries. They have affected ethnic and religious minorities; with one exception, they were not the result of ideological fanaticism but rather of religious or nationalist or tribal enmities, or simply the work of crazy tyrants. Unfortunately, there is no reason to be optimistic in this respect. Many will probably perish in similar circumstances in the years to come. There is little or nothing America can do to help other than appeal to "world public opinion," and we all know what that amounts to.

Third World governments are reluctant to condemn such massacres—it might create a dangerous precedent. Human lives count less in those parts, and if people of the same color kill each other this, for reasons not entirely clear, is thought to be a venial sin. However, there is a dialectical effect. Not long ago India was reluctant to acknowledge that a terrorist problem existed, let alone to condemn it. As a result of events during the last year, however, Indian perceptions have begun to change a little. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, may apply in future to other Third World countries.

WHAT follows from all this is that we have done as well as could be expected. I will be surprised if the coming years bring radical change in world affairs. My interest has been in history, and historians have on the whole been less shocked by foolishness, cruelty, lack of compassion, missed opportunities, and various tragedies than sociologists and students of political science, simply because historians have been preoccupied with what actually happened rather than with what should have happened.

For the same reason I have not been particularly perturbed by the many and often extreme misjudgments of contemporaries trying to assess current affairs and future trends. Only a few years ago Pol Pot was hailed by some as a great liberator and after him Khomeini—it is a very long list indeed. Only a couple of years ago earnest and well-meaning students of world affairs, young and old, uttered the direst warnings: it was 1914 all over again, the world was on the brink of the abyss. Like late medieval itinerant preachers they called on us to do penance while there was time. Nineteen-eighty-four has come and gone; Armageddon is no longer seen on the horizon, only Messrs. Gorbachev and Shevardnadze; even the reputation of the prophets of doom has not suffered serious damage. Such muddleheadedness has been frequent in the distant as well as the recent past. But how could mankind have survived so many

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wrong predictions? I do not profess to know the answer. Perhaps it is that people are more circumspect when they act than when they make speeches or write articles.

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Michael Ledeen: The short answers to Eliot Cohen's three questions: the United States is not serious about foreign policy, and thus has failed to sustain either a coherent strategic plan (the nuclear challenge) or a geopolitical policy worthy of the name. There has been considerable improvement in the arts of peaceful living—a subject that Americans take quite seriously—but with some major defects.

The United States, and specifically something approaching Ronald Reagan's vision of America, is all of a sudden bidding fair to become the model for the West again, after many years of falling out of favor. For all its manifest problems, the United States is clearly the best place in the world to work, grow, risk, and create. It may be more comfortable and secure to live in a welfare state like Sweden, and it can be more luxurious and aesthetically lusher to live somewhere like Italy. But it is almost impossible to work normally in an Italian type of environment, and in Sweden and other similar countries, the thrill of risk-taking is hard to find, since the society guarantees you against failure. The United States is one of the few countries in the world where dramatic vertical mobility on the basis of achievement is still possible . . . in both directions.

In most other societies, your destiny is generally determined at birth; to whom you are born, where you are born, what accent you will have, what shade your skin is, and so forth. The phenomenon is well known in places like Great Britain (where your accent defines the class to which you belong), but it is also one of the defining characteristics of, for example, Italian society. The students I taught at the University of Rome in the early 1970's were quite understandably enraged by the fact that their talents and education would not suffice to give them access to the riches of their society. It was hard to imagine that anyone with a Sicilian accent would ever become the head of one of the major Italian corporations (although the traditional channels of upward mobility remained: Church, military, and Mafia).

It is hard for Americans to appreciate the excitement generated throughout the world by our kind of society, just as our intense quest for social justice often blinds us to the surprising fairness of American life. Ours is undoubtedly the fairest heterogenous society in the world, and with the possible exception of Scandinavia, it is fairer than all the other homogeneous societies as well.

The big failure is that we have abandoned proper standards. Whether in the enforcement of justice, the education of children, the administration of the government, or in regard to questions of "equal opportunity," there has been a tendency to try to be nice to everyone and to downplay differences in performance. The result is a lessening of striving, both by those on the top who see no advantage in taking risks (this is particularly acute in large bureaucracies, including the federal government), and by those on the bottom who wait for good things to be done for them. If there is no premium for exceptional performance, and there is a distinct downside to trying something imaginative, creative endeavor suffers. It is a tricky business, to be sure, since the ideal solution is to reward ability and enterprise while protecting less-talented individuals from undue misery, but the pendulum clearly has swung too far in the direction of protection and away from rewarding exceptional achievement. Not surprisingly, immigrants still try hardest; they appreciate the opportunity, and they still have the traditional virtues of hard work and self-help. Most of all, they recognize the uniqueness of a free society. And when people overseas have the opportunity to leave their own country, most of the time they try to get here. In particular, those who are creative, and seek outlets for their creativity, whether in art, music, science, or business, know that this is the best place for them.

Along with the neglect of standards has come an unpleasant politicization of life. News coverage, university politics, and foreign policy—all areas where bipartisanship and fair-mindedness are indispensable to successful endeavor—have become terribly partisan. I am afraid that this partisanship has crept into the void created by the abandonment of standards. If, as is increasingly the case, one man's opinion is held to be as good as anyone else's, then how are we to discriminate among various contenders? The political beliefs of the individuals involved become the bases for choice, once again to the detriment of society. In both foreign policy and journalism, for example, real historical knowledge and understanding are hardly to be found. This is not surprising, since history is rarely taught in the schools, and is generally disdained by our political and opinion leaders (for the simple reason that the requirement of real knowledge subverts the notion that one opinion is as good as the next).

FOREIGN POLICY is a serious subject, but it is rarely taken seriously by Americans. We prefer moralistic abstractions to realistic appraisals of the world. We are extremely reluctant to accept the fact that we

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have many enemies, and in the face of threats we have a national complacency that can be explained only by a combination of lucky geography (no dangerous neighbors, big oceans) and nonchalance.

We are therefore slow to react to danger. We were late to recognize that our vital interests were engaged in World War I, and a generation later it required a Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor to rouse us to a response to totalitarianism. And from Korea to Vietnam to Central America we have adopted a step-by-step approach to military conflict whereby we seek to determine precisely how much power is required to resolve the matter in our favor, rather than bringing our considerable power to bear against our enemies. More recently, we have been unwilling or unable to fight effectively against international terrorism, even as hundreds of American soldiers and diplomats have been murdered and as American citizens are held hostage by outspoken enemies of the United States. In World War II, we realized that a total effort was required, and we behaved accordingly; nowadays, even when we determine that it is time to fight, we do so with the same lack of seriousness that characterizes our overall approach to the world.

In short, we seem not to recognize that our first obligation is to ensure that our geopolitical interests, along with those of our allies, are protected. But if we are unable to distinguish between friends and enemies, it is hard to define our geopolitical interests.

The extreme case of our international confusion came during the Carter period, when Secretary of State Cyrus Vance announced that American President Jimmy Carter and Soviet dictator Leonid Brezhnev "shared common dreams." Even when, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the President revised his view of the USSR, we retained the hope that our differences could eventually be resolved at the negotiating table. This hope drives a large part of our political culture, from the arms-control lobby to those who oppose any use of American military power or the covert support of other fighting forces anywhere in the world.

It is as if we invariably believed that attacks against us were based on confusion and misunderstanding rather than on our enemies' desire to see us diminished and ultimately destroyed. We hope that somehow we can resolve our basic conflict, that sufficient good will and patience will eventually bring the Soviets to agree to maintain a stable, peaceful relationship with us and our friends and allies. It may be possible to arrive at something like a stable relationship with the Soviets, but this can only be achieved if their efforts to expand their empire are systematically thwarted, and they decide to come to terms with us. It can certainly not be accomplished simply by talking to them, or by attempting to "set a good example," as we have sometimes tried to do.

This is nowhere so clear as in the area of strategic competition with the Soviet Union. Whatever one's passions about nuclear weapons, the strategic balance of power should be terribly important to us. Yet we voluntarily and unilaterally abandoned our strategic superiority, permitting the Russians to catch up with and then pass us. Many arms-control advocates of the period enthusiastically welcomed the Soviet achievement of nuclear parity because they believed this would end the arms race, terminating what one of them (Paul Warnke) had described as the spectacle of two "apes on a treadmill." This did not take place. Instead, the Soviets—with a proper appreciation of the seriousness of superior military power of whatever nature—continued their strategic build-up.

It is hard to understand how this happened, and it is more difficult still to comprehend our determined refusal to come to grips with the nature of Soviet totalitarianism. For more than twenty years after World War II, totalitarianism was the object of a good deal of serious and intense study, producing significant works by Hannah Arendt, Carl Friedrich, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Walter Laqueur, and others. But for some time now, most commentators have been acting as if nothing had been learned. When Jeane J. Kirkpatrick used the well-established distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, she was criticized by a variety of academic and journalistic "authorities" who were clearly unfamiliar with the work of the previous generation.

Consequently, there is a failure to recognize the uniqueness of totalitarianism, and many of our "experts" act as if the only difference between one dictatorship and another is how we feel about it. From this misunderstanding, a series of false symmetries has crept into the language: Soviet Gulags are treated the same way as Western prisons; Marcos and Pinochet are lumped together with Gorbachev, Jaruzelski, and Zhivkov; and the political processes of the Kremlin are described in the same terms reserved for our own political affairs (the interim between one Soviet dictator and another is referred to as the "transition period," as if one American President were following another; the Kremlin seems to be populated by "hawks and doves," just like Washington, and so forth). Nor is "totalitarianism" the only degraded term in our current political vocabulary; "fascist" has been similarly stripped of its true importance, and is now used for any dictatorship of the Right (or any American administration, for that matter) which is disliked by the Left.

This lack of seriousness in analysis leads us to make errors in policy. The case of Nicaragua is a classic example, for although we have abundant evidence of the totalitarian aims of the Sandinista regime, a substantial part of educated opinion in the United States refuses to accept it, and fails to draw the necessary conclusions. This is even more remarkable because we have a fully documented case

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study, consisting of the papers captured during the invasion of Grenada in 1983, of what happens to a country when it enters the Soviet empire. These documents—available in our National Archives to anyone who asks for them—show how the Communist party of Grenada (known as the "New Jewel Movement") systematically and deliberately deceived world opinion and its own citizens about the regime's real intentions. While claiming to be democratic, pluralistic, and devoted to the principles of a mixed economy and international neutrality, the Grenadan Communists were putting into place a repressive dictatorship and a Communist economic system, and were working under Soviet and Cuban guidance to subvert democratic interests in the Caribbean region (as well as cooperating with countries like Libya, Vietnam, and East Germany and with movements like the PLO in other theaters around the world).

Much of this activity in Grenada was closely coordinated with the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, to a point where the identity of the Grenadan and Nicaraguan world views is beyond any reasonable doubt. In particular, the two regimes worked closely to subvert Christian churches and democratic-socialist parties and governments throughout Central America and the Caribbean. Nicaraguans and Grenadans met secretly with Cuban and other Communists to plan their activities, and they organized their subversion of the churches together with officials of the Cuban intelligence service, the DGI. Yet despite this abundant and incontrovertible evidence, little attention has been paid to Grenada as a case study of the nature of the Soviet empire, and as a model for Nicaragua. I suppose we will have to wait until the Nicaraguan documents are deposited in our archives before people grant the true nature of the Sandinista regime.

This failure to understand the nature of Communist totalitarianism is, of course, of a piece with our earlier failure to come to grips with the nature of Nazi totalitarianism, and is of a piece with our general reluctance to grant the existence of real enemies in the world. It required a direct attack on American soil to galvanize the country into an effective response forty-four years ago, and this was almost too late. Today, we can no longer afford the luxury of such nonchalance, and our enemies are unlikely to "save" us as they did in the 1940's, primarily because nuclear deterrence *has* worked, and direct conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union is highly unlikely. Our battles with the Kremlin take place in other political and geographical forums, and it is there that we must prepare to fight and win.

IF WE are going to prevail against totalitarianism, we must begin by understanding what we are facing. We are unfortunately quite far from achieving that understanding. The first step is to acknowledge that our principal enemy—the Soviet empire—seeks our eventual conquest and destruction, not because of the policies of one American administration or another, but because the very existence of a free, democratic superpower is a direct threat to the Kremlin. It is therefore both our military and economic strength, *and* our commitment to freedom, that the Soviets seek to overcome. This is why they simultaneously strive to become more powerful than we, and to discredit our achievements and our ideals.

We have failed to grasp the nature of our conflict with totalitarianism, and to explain it to our own citizens and to our friends and allies. So it is that we have permitted the Soviets to blame us repeatedly for their own sins. Our prudent responses to Soviet initiatives have been characterized as dangerous, both by influential segments of our own media and our own political class, and by some of our allies, while the original Soviet moves have been discounted. Our efforts to install Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe were often condemned as "destabilizing" at a time when we had done nothing except talk about a response to the massive deployment of Soviet SS-20's (and some of the criticism even came from the very same allies who had asked for our missiles in the first place). And today, President Reagan's proposal to develop and test a space-based missile-defense system is often treated as dangerous, while years of similar Soviet efforts have been ignored. Our tentative steps to combat international terrorism are frequently decried, while the terrorists themselves are treated with fascination verging on admiration. On some occasions, the debate in this country has taken on truly bizarre aspects, as when Lebanese terrorists were treated with the respect reserved for "newsmakers," even while murdering and holding hostage innocent American citizens. Such an inversion of reality shows that our approach to international affairs is fundamentally lacking in seriousness, and our feeble repsonse to international terrorism only accentuates our difficulties.

TO BE SURE, the current administration is better than its immediate predecessor, but it falls far short of the necessary standards. This is particularly disappointing, since many of us had hoped for a far more vigorous pursuit of our struggle against totalitarianism. On the other hand, at least some of our battles are now going better, and our enemies find themselves in difficulty in many places. The tide appears to be turning in Central America, and the democracies are giving greater support to anti-Communist insurgencies in Africa and Asia. But even here, there is little indication that the Reagan administration has the tenacity and the determination to carry its good instincts to the level of successful policy and effective explanation. Its willingness to describe its Central American support of the *contras* as "humanitarian aid," for example, suggests that we are still far from acknowledging the nature of the struggle against

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totalitarianism in our own hemisphere. Until our leaders speak forthrightly and persistently about the central struggle of our time, and design and conduct effective policies to deal with it, our response to this challenge will remain unsatisfactory.

We may be headed in the right direction at the moment, but we shall never have coherent policies without clarity of vision and a tenacity of resolve that this country has yet to demonstrate over even a moderately long period of time.

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Daniel Patrick Moynihan: Not all that long ago I was aboard the United States Ship *New Jersey,* off the shores of Tripoli. It was, and is, a sister ship of the *Missouri*, on board which the Japanese had surrendered in Tokyo Bay in 1945, the very stuff of that "giant's strength, in production, in cooperation, in planning, in courage" of which Elliot Cohen wrote in the first issue of COMMENTARY a few months after the surrender. Theodore H. White (who was present at the surrender) has written more recently, "It is difficult to recall now . . . how very good we were in those days, with what precision we ordered things."

Oh yes! The keel of the *New Jersey* was laid on September 16, 1940, and she was launched just twenty-seven months later; fought in three Pacific wars; was mothballed for twelve years; then brought back in 1982. I voted in the Senate to bring her back into the fleet; not, to tell the truth, that I was or am so certain that we have need of battleships in the age of missiles but because she is so damn beautiful. The *Iowa* class: no better ships of the line ever went to sea; none so mighty, so comely, so assured. The gleaming white teak deck, the bright work, the gun turrets all silvered steel, sliding, revolving, locking, shuddering forth unequaled violence. And that bow—that clipper bow outward bound from New York harbor with which we first showed ourselves in the world, and in 1945 showed it good. "God be with them times! . . . There was some life in it then."

Years had passed. The *New Jersey* hadn't changed, but the world had. We were off Beirut, to be precise. Shelling a bit; apparently missing, but then missing what? Who exactly was the enemy? The Marines were ashore but only just; they had dug in and weren't going farther; in fact they would be coming out within weeks. Their beachhead was barely 300 yards deep; the northern tip was the crushed barracks where 241 men had died in their sleep a few weeks earlier at the hands of someone willing to die with them. We would never find out who.

The Marines had not failed; the Navy hadn't; but the mission had. It was not hard to figure why it had; nor yet to foresee that it would. We had gone in with the rhetoric of 1945 in the world of 1983. I had spent a good part of two days on the Senate floor saying as much. Be clear: I *supported* sending American forces to Lebanon. The situation there was still salvageable. The Israelis were certainly going to help; the French were willing; the Italians; the British. The crisis was by now a commonplace one. A patch of former empire, Ottoman in this instance, mandated to France by the League of Nations. New states created with varying degrees of formality: Lebanon first, then Syria which never accepted the independence of its neighbor. The population all mixed—Muslim: Sunni and Shiite; Christian: Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Greek and Roman Catholic; Druse; all or most speaking Arabic. Some Jews, at least until a while ago. Now also many Palestinians, and a very considerable contingent of Syrian soldiery. The Christians at least were pro-Western (save, apparently, the Palestinians among them), and the Muslims for the most part seemed not to find this intolerable. It was Israel's northern flank, which had for the longest while been both stable, more or less, and democratic.

Now it seemed about to collapse in the ethnic misery of our age. Yet something could likely be salvaged, and if so it was worth attempting.

What we attempted was something more. In September 1983, President Reagan sent the Congress a Joint Resolution stating:

> The Congress finds that . . . the removal of all foreign forces from Lebanon is an essential United States foreign policy objective in the Middle East.

I spoke to the matter on September 29, twenty-four days before the Marine barracks were destroyed:

> My purpose this afternoon is to state that if the Senate should vote to adopt the resolution before us, . . . we will assert an objective in foreign policy that it is quite beyond our power to attain. Disequilibrium shall accordingly be the result, marked by turmoil, setbacks, even defeat. . . .

My point was direct: we did not have the power to drive all foreign forces from *all* of Lebanon; only the coast. I concluded: "To declare as essential what cannot be achieved is to ensure failure."

Some will see in these remarks a changed approach to the world. I don't. The rule is to keep your commitments in balance with your power, and that extends to your staying power.

Which is not at all to say that the "giant's strength" of which Elliot Cohen wrote in 1945 is no more, or even indeed diminished. The United States today is a more powerful country

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than it was in 1945, and in so many ways a better country. Above all we have broken the caste barriers which had kept blacks essentially outside the democratic polity for the whole of our previous existence. Opportunities for women and, through education, for persons of all classes are vastly greater today than forty years ago. And so down a long list.

Not everything is better. Some things are worse. Indeed some things are so very much worse, and have been for so long now, that we are beginning to lose the memory of a time when they were so very much better.

Take New York City. It was incomparably a better place to live in 1945 than it is forty years later. It was then the obvious choice—the *Soviet* choice!—for the headquarters of the United Nations. World politics apart, I wonder if such a choice would be made today. There is wealth enough in New York City: more than ever, I suppose. And glitter. And tall buildings south of 59th Street. But much of the city is burned out; ravaged; squalid. Crime is a constant preoccupation of the citizenry. (Street crime hardly existed in 1945 in New York City. The subways? Clean, cheap, dependable, safe.) New York today has the richest congressional district in the nation—Manhattan's East Side—and it also has four of the ten poorest congressional districts in the same nation, one of which adjoins the richest if you are in a mood for Disraeli's view of things. Is this true across the nation? No. Yet what is true of our most important city is in important ways true *of* the nation.

Crime in New York reflects the most glaring of our failures to muster our "giant's strength" in pursuit of the "arts of peaceful living." But the breakdown of family is more important and this is nationwide. In 1983, with considerable help from the Bureau of the Census and scholars at Princeton, I developed an equation which, with fair confidence, projected that a third (32 percent) of the children born in 1980 would receive benefits under Aid to Families with Dependent Children before reaching age eighteen. Think: forty years after we had shown the world our "giant's strength" in production, a third of our children can expect to live on welfare before reaching maturity. Indeed, we have become the first society in history in which children are the poorest group in the population. The chances of a child under six being poor are seven times as great as those of a person over sixty-five. Mind, we *have* achieved the extraordinary feat of reducing poverty among the aged—but nearly *one-quarter* of our children are growing up poor. What does this presage forty years from *now*?

In truth, we have already entered an unprecedented, wholly unforeseen period of declining family income. There is much talk just now of the United States having entered a period of "conservative" politics. Surely we are not as liberal in the sense of generous with one another and with the rest of the world as we were disposed to be in those flush postwar years. As with most economic questions, these are relative matters. The median family income in the United States today is almost twice as high as what it was in 1945. But it is *lower* than it was in 1973.

This is an official secret of sorts which the government has contrived to conceal by publishing the data in the P-60 Series of the Current Population Reports of the Bureau of the Census. The statistical series begins in 1947, by which time family income had been rising steadily from 1940 or thereabouts. That steady rise continued for another quarter-century. With the exception of four years, median family income in the United States broke a new record every year for a quarter of a century. If the data series had begun earlier it would be more like a third of a century. Then in 1973 it peaked and commenced a long, steady downward movement. In constant (1984) dollars, median family income reached $28,167 in 1973. By 1984 it had declined to $26,433. Median family income today—year-long income—is exactly $39 greater than it was in 1970. And, of course, $1,724 less than the peak year of 1973.

This is what is meant when you hear it said that young people today cannot expect to live as well as their parents did, and that this is so for the first time in our history. That "giant's strength" built a house for just about every one of us who came into GI-Bill benefits in 1945. No longer. A house of your own is no longer something Americans can take for granted, any more than they can expect to live in one as part of an intact family.

A car of your own? Well, yes. But don't expect it to come from Detroit. It is likely as not to come, whole or in part, from Japan, whose industry was destroyed between 1942 and 1945 by American bombers made in Detroit. I don't think we have yet taken the measure of the psychological impact on Americans of the shift in the manufacture of those basic artifacts wherein Daniel Boorstin locates so much of the American identity—his "community of consumption"—from American-built to foreign-built. Let someone who runs for office tell you: it is unsettling in a way I have never encountered in more than thirty years of government and politics. The cries for protection are different from what they were: they attain a kind of pleading. *What happened to us? Why aren't we what we were? What happened to that giant's strength?*

This was unsettling enough in the 1970's when income stagnation began; it has become truly unsettling in the present when we find that not only must we go abroad to obtain what were previously the basic necessities of the American character, but we now experience the ultimate humiliation of having to go abroad to borrow the money to purchase the imports.

I cannot restrain myself in this regard. The Rea-

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gan administration, which rode into town intent on shooting the place up a bit, and more than a bit, has long since lost that energy and is subsiding into the mentality of a nursing home. Get through the day. Let others worry about the future. In four and a half years, the Reagan administration doubled the national debt and turned the United States into a debtor nation, as we borrowed abroad to finance deficits at home.

LIBERALS, fallen away or otherwise, have difficulty grasping the enormity of the economic wreckage which Ronald Reagan has wrought. For all "those" years—Elliot Cohen would surely have testified—a certain type of conservative, mainly Republican, railed and railed about New Deal deficits and debt. They weren't necessarily wrong in principle, weren't wrong at all, but were quite mistaken in practice. *At the time* the government needed to spend more than it took in, and if the debt went up a bit, it went up from almost nothing. A huge debt was incurred during World War II to create the "giant's strength," but this was quickly paid off and thereafter for the longest while there was no real debt problem and no real deficit problem. Economic doctrine actually called for deficits in slack times. George P. Shultz as budget director under President Nixon carefully crafted a "full employment deficit" which provided outlays at the level of revenue which would flow to the government under conditions of full employment. As the economy was not at full employment—generally defined as 4 percent—there would be a deficit, but it would tend to eliminate itself over time by stimulating the economy to higher utilization of productive capacity.

Economists are no longer as confident as they once were about "fine-tuning" the economy, but genuine conservatives like Shultz stayed well within the range of acceptable risks, and their deliberate deficits never amounted to much. This changed completely when the radical libertarians of the Reagan administration came to office and *deliberately* created a deficit, not for the purpose of stimulating the economy, but in order to shrink the size of government. The President said he was going to do this. On February 5, 1981, in his first televised address to the nation following his inauguration, he stated:

> There are always those who told us that taxes couldn't be cut until spending was reduced. Well, you know, we can lecture our children about extravagance until we run out of voice and breath. Or we can cure their extravagance by reducing their allowance.

This spring, in an interview in the Viennese journal *Profil*, Friedrich von Hayek elaborated:

> When the government of the United States borrows a large part of the savings of the world, the consequence is that capital must become scarce and expensive in the whole world. That is a problem. But you see, one of Reagan's advisers told me why the President has permitted that to happen, which makes the matter partly excusable; Reagan thinks it is impossible to persuade Congress that expenditures must be reduced, unless one creates deficits so large that absolutely everyone becomes convinced that no more money can be spent. Thus he hoped to persuade Congress of the necessity of spending reductions by means of an immense deficit. Unfortunately he has not succeeded, but even so this explanation makes it understandable how any reasonable man can do such a thing at all.

Don't bet the farm, the old saying goes. Well, these people bet not just the farm but the whole country. It was quackery. They thought they could transform a system of political accommodation in place for two centuries by the cunning manipulation of unwitting, or witless, committee chairmen and for that matter cabinet officers. Instead, in four years they have transformed the United States into a debtor nation with a huge deficit that is compounding as each year we borrow more money to pay the interest on the money we borrowed the year before. (The President denies this, and it of course may be that the Commerce Department is lying.) More and more we borrow abroad to pay interest we owe abroad.

To be sure, the Reagan intellectuals had some bad luck. A bidding war broke out in the House of Representatives as to who could cut revenues most, and a deficit emerged that no amount of program cutting could eliminate. Congress indexed the income tax, so that revenues ceased to rise with the price structure. Then prices came down faster than expected, and then the Federal Reserve engineered a recession, and then OPEC got in trouble. All true. But that is why you don't bet the farm on quack schemes. They did and we lost.

The United States government is now likely to be in a state of fiscal paralysis for ten, possibly fifteen, years to come. I have written elsewhere that if we can get a fiscally responsible administration in office in the 1990's, we can begin to grow out of the problem, especially as Social Security retirement trust-fund revenues begin to accumulate ($500 billion by 1995; $1 trillion by 1999; there are still two payroll-tax increases to come, which is to say they have already been legislated).

In the process, however, I cannot see how we escape a gradual diminution of our capacity to influence events abroad. We are the world's largest debtor nation. The defense build-up has stopped; I would not be surprised to see a decline begin. As I write, the Washington *Post* reports: "Five-Year Pentagon Budget Plan Facing $300 Billion in Trims." The New York *Times* writes of "sweeping cutbacks . . . in conventional military forces. . . ." Something such also happened in the years 1968-76, but largely because Congress didn't like our foreign policy; now it will be a matter of not being able to afford it. At the highest

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levels of the Department of State it is said with increasing alarm that Congress has already cut back "security assistance" funds to the point where we can barely meet our commitments to Israel and Egypt and pay the "rent" for our overseas bases. Nothing is left over for any other countries. If this has happened in the course of a still relatively brief period of $200-billion deficits, what next, especially if a recession takes us to $300 billion? Will the bases go? Egypt? Israel? What next?

THIS has to concern anyone trying to think his way through the "ultimate challenge" of nuclear weapons, as Elliot Cohen so presciently put it. For a while, I grant, I was a little bit scared of the new Reagan group. The rundown of defense outlays mentioned earlier ended in the last year of President Ford's administration. A small increase then was followed by steadily larger increases under President Carter. After a long pause, new weapons had begun to come on stream, most notably the cruise missiles, nuclear weapons of uncanny capacities. The biggest-ever nuclear submarine, the Trident, began sliding down the ways with seamanlike orderliness. A new missile also, the D5, for the new boat: a fearsome creature. Finally there was the technology of the "Stealth" bomber coming along. The MX was soon to be deployed. Clearly the United States was engaged in renewing its nuclear forces. By 1980 we had 9,000 nuclear warheads aimed at the Soviet Union.

And how did the Republican platform of that year describe these nuclear decisions? They were described as continuing "in effect . . . unilateral disarmament."

I gave the "defense speech" at the Democratic convention and said: "Must we not ask: if a party is this careless with words, can it be trusted with power?"

Once in office, however, Mr. Reagan abandoned President Carter's plan for basing the "new" MX missile on a "race track" meandering through Idaho and Nevada. This was, I suppose, playing politics with national defense, but it is the kind of politics I don't find all that troubling. Paul Laxalt of Nevada was and is his best friend in the Senate. They were governors together. If their roles were reversed, Senator Laxalt sure as hell wouldn't have dug up Mr. Reagan's California. When he opted instead to put the MX in the old Minuteman silos, however, I got scared again. The Soviets had long since targeted those silos—which is why President Nixon and his Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, decided we had to get out of them. To put the MX, a much more powerful weapon, back in the sites we were trying to get out of would be to deploy them in a launch-on-warning mode. But the President understood this: he only asked for 100 missiles, half the number Carter wanted. After we talked at length in the Senate, he agreed to cut this number in half again. I would have preferred 40, but 50 doesn't put us on a hair trigger, at least so far as I can judge.

The President's Strategic Defense Initiative is not in itself anything new. The research has been going on for years. If deployed it would mark a huge change in our basic "second-strike" strategy, but this possibility was in the air. In my 1980 convention speech, I stated: "We have commenced a wrenching review of the whole doctrine of deterrence. . . ." It may be the prospect will persuade the Soviets to accept the deep cuts on both sides that the President deeply desires. It is time we had a President who was not content merely to negotiate the rate in the rise of nuclear arms as between the superpowers. Or it may be the Soviets will respond by building more. I don't know, but the President now has them negotiating for a change.

I RISK derision, I know, but the Soviets don't obsess me. I think we are a little Russocentric in New York: a holdover from the age of immigration. As we think only of the Russians, we suppose that they think only of us. I doubt this somehow. Observe Adam Ulam, on these *Dangerous Relations*:

> It was not only competition with the U.S. but also—perhaps we would not exaggerate by saying mainly—the direct and indirect threat posed by the Chinese acquisition of these arms that prompted the Kremlin to . . . step up the pace of its own nuclear arms build-up in the 1960's. . . .

I don't see how we can expect history to spare us nuclear hostilities of some sort in years to come, but I also expect that these are likely to occur in what is called the developing world. I was Ambassador to India in 1974 when that nation set off its first nuclear explosion, and in due course was sent in to express our regrets that it had done so to then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. My time in India was drawing short and making clear (I hope!) that I was expressing only my own views and not those of my government, I said I thought India had made a profound mistake. It had been until then the unquestioned hegemonic power on the subcontinent of Asia. Now that would end. The nuclear bomb, like gunpowder in its time, was a great leveler. In ten years' time, I said to Mrs. Gandhi, there would be a general in power in Islamabad and he would call you one Monday to say he had four bombs at his disposal, and that either India by Thursday returned Kashmir and the Punjab to its rightful Pakistani rulers, or Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and New Delhi would go up in a mushroom cloud and they would all meet in paradise on Friday.

That hasn't happened yet. But then the Pakistanis don't have their weapon *yet*. They are close. Everyone knows it, and as I write the President has just dispatched an envoy to see if he can help relations between the two nations, and to ease

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India's understandable concerns about our relationship with its neighbor. But simultaneously the President has approved a huge sale of British fighter craft to Saudi Arabia. The Saudis are getting AWACS from us, and also modified 707 refueling tankers. They already have a good supply of F-15's coming. The Pakistanis in the meantime have acquired F-16's from us. The F-16 with modifications could easily carry nuclear weapons. With F-15's escorting, under the direction of an AWACS, this would make for a formidable nuclear delivery team. All that is missing for this system is a bomb. The Islamic Bomb.

And how shall we influence that part of the world? The way we have influenced the Soviets in Afghanistan, is that it?

If not India-Pakistan, think Arab-Israel, think especially Russia-China. (Mao built vast underground cities below Beijing and other sites, awaiting the Soviet missiles.) That is my difficulty with a certain *abstract* preoccupation with totalitarianism that one senses in Washington these days. All the writing was done thirty and forty years ago; it is as if the capital has been taken over by slow readers. Totalitarianism is a hideous form of government, the most hideous form of government ever devised. It obviously endures. But it does not succeed, and I cannot imagine that it will prevail. We must give it as little encouragement as possible. The most dangerous form of encouragement is to confirm the few tattered Marxist-Leninst prophecies which the totalitarian elites cling to. If I understand Lenin's theory of imperialism, he prophesied, as it were, that a business-oriented government in the United States would lift the grain embargo imposed following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it being necessary to capitalism to dispose of surplus production. Lenin had never heard of the Iowa primaries, but was he not proved right! That, I respectfully suggest, is the wrong way for us to behave. In my view, following an atrocity such as the invasion of Afghanistan, we should show the Soviets that we do not need their money and in certain circumstances will not take it.

A QUARTER-CENTURY ago Nathan Glazer and I finished *Beyond the Melting Pot*, our first book on ethnicity as a post-modern phenomenon. Never mind about me: Glazer was trying to figure out something more complicated than why we have "ethnic" mayors. If we were right, especially in the more general subsequent work, *Ethnicity* (1975), then quite simply Marx was wrong. And Lenin also, and all the demonic or deranged souls who sought The End of Days, as Michael Walzer has put it, in the labor theory of value. Blood will tell, said we, and I have observed little else since. I commend Michael Walzer's essay "On 'Failed Totalitarianism' ":

> Stalin's epigones in Russia (and now Mao's in China) rule their own country like imperial bureaucrats; they resemble the puppets they have installed in neighboring states, and they share the same devitalized purpose.

The regimes in Moscow and Beijing will outlast our time surely, but who will go there for instruction? inspiration? example? *Who?* Who does now?

I PUT this as best I know how in a commencement address at New York University in 1984, having George Orwell much in mind, but thinking that things worked out somewhat better:

> Let me offer the thought that the desired outcome of the world politics the United States pursued in the period of its great ascendancy a generation ago is that that ascendancy would gradually merge into an ascendant world community of like-minded, above all democratic, nations. This has happened. Our politics worked. Now this change, of course, causes problems, too. We have now to pay a great deal more heed to other nations than we once did. Fine. That is the mark of *our* success. But somehow of late, we seem to be mistaking it for a sign of weakness, and attributing that weakness to the rise of Soviet strength.
>
> What pitiful stuff that is. The truth is that the Soviet idea is spent. It commands some influence in the world; and fear. But it summons no loyalty. History is moving away from it with astounding speed. I would not press the image, but it is as if the whole Marxist-Leninist ethos is hurtling off into a black hole in the universe. They will be remembered for what? The death of Andrei Sakharov? Yelena Bonner?
>
> Are there Marxist-Leninists here and about in the world? Yes: especially when the West allows Communism to identify with nationalism. But in truth, when they do succeed, how well do they do? And for how long?
>
> We should be less obsessed with the Soviets. If we must learn to live with military parity, let us keep all the more in mind that we have consolidated an overwhelming economic advantage. The 24 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, known as the OECD—a quintessential initiative in world politics of the postwar United States—now produce 60 percent of the world's GNP. The Soviet bloc produces 19 percent. What is the rest of the world to think?
>
> The historical outcome is certain *if* we can keep the nuclear peace and attend to our own arrangements in a manner that they continue to improve. The world monetary system, which the United States put in place forty years ago, is badly in need of adjustment, lest it become an instrument for draining wealth from the nations that are least wealthy.
>
> The culture of terror, a peculiar mutant of the totalitarian age, threatens democratic societies across the globe: in my own ancestral home of Ireland; in Italy; Israel; now India. That the governments and peoples of these nations show surpassing resources of firmness and courage does not make of terror any less a trial. (The Soviets, of course, contribute greatly to terrorist

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movements. Here we have no choice but to confront them. But, surely, with a sense of proportion.) And, lastly, a kind of latent tribalism is sweeping much of the earth, challenging the traditions of modernity in which we have invested so much hope. This, too, is to be understood and confronted. But now, are these not challenges enough for one generation?

I suggest they are, and I offer a closing thought: our grand strategy should be to wait out the Soviet Union; its time is passing. Let us resolve to be here, our old selves, with an ever surging font of ideas. When the time comes, it will be clear that in the end freedom did prevail.

A *final* closing thought. Elliot Cohen both feared much and hoped for much. But I doubt that even he could have hoped for the influence COMMENTARY has had on democratic thought these four long decades.

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Richard John Neuhaus: About twenty years ago, in the middle of the forty-year journey in question, I was with a clerical friend one evening waxing philosophic over a postprandial brandy and cigar. All things considered, he wanted to know, would I describe democracy in America as imperiled or as basically secure? I allowed as how it was a superficially interesting question, but surely the answer was almost self-evident. American democracy had to be basically secure, or else we could not be doing all the things we were doing. Bringing the civil-rights movement home to the urban North, sit-ins for community control of schools and other government agencies, the launching of Clergy Concerned About Vietnam—all this was our protest against the "white liberal establishment" and assumed that the establishment was very much established. Our efforts were necessary, I suggested, as a critical corrective, but they presupposed the stability of the democratic consensus that we intended to criticize and correct. We sometimes called ourselves radicals, but at that time we really did mean that we were liberals in a hurry. More than anyone else, Martin Luther King was our mentor in these matters, and he had made it abundantly clear that he had come not to abolish the liberal promise but to fulfill it.

Strange how one evening's conversation can stick in your mind that way. For me, born into an apolitical Lutheran family and church, the making of connections between religion and politics was something quite novel. It was also quite controversial, which seemed like a good thing to be at age twenty-eight. I was much too late, of course, to be shaped by the tortuous 1930's debates about Marxism and liberal democracy, debates which informed Elliot Cohen's 1945 ponderings about the threat of totalitarianism. And too early to have read Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. But soon enough the ideological fissures within what we called "the Movement" would force hard choices between two radicalisms, that of liberalism's fulfillment and that of liberalism's abolition. By 1975 I was answering my friend's question very differently. I had come to believe that, on balance, the democratic experiment is not secure but is indeed threatened by opponents both internal and external. And that is how I would answer the question today, which is why, as I am told is the case, friends from the Movement deplore my conversion to what they call, in their kinder moments, neoconservatism.

This brief indulgence in autobiography is intended to define the "we" in my response to the question of how successfully we have met the threat of totalitarianism. The "we" in this case is mainline religion, notably the brand-name churches of establishment Protestantism, such as the United Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ. These are the bodies that historically have given moral definition to American public life. They represent the thoroughly "Americanized" style of relating religion to politics, a style now emulated by more recent arrivals, including many Lutherans and Roman Catholics. In recent decades the mainline churches have not met the threat of totalitarianism very well at all. They generally deny that there is such a threat, the conventional wisdom being that those who disagree are attempting to obscure the real threat, which is represented by the United States of America and its purposes in the world. One way to put it is to say that the New Left of a decade and more ago is alive and well in the church-and-society curia of mainline religion. More than in any other institutional complex in American life, the "peace and justice network" of these churches provides secure haven for refugees from radicalisms past.

It may be protested that this generalization is too broad. Most particular umbrage is taken at the suggestion that mainline religious leadership has taken a decidedly anti-American turn. We are not anti-American, they vehemently insist. We are pro-American, but we are pro the America that we want to get on the right side of the struggle for peace and jusice. (Said he: "How do I love thee? I love thee the way I would like to remake thee into a person worthy of my love.") But an observer may be excused for thinking mainline religion to be anti-American when its pronouncements and publications more or less consistently propound the doctrines that the United States and its allies are the chief source of global conflict and injustice in the world today, and that the United States must chiefly blame itself for the hostility that it

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encounters from others. If others threaten us, it is because we first threaten them.

In some respects the present posture of mainline-religious leadership is a dramatic change from the past. The social-gospel movement of the late 19th and earlier 20th centuries manifested a supreme confidence in the "Holy Trinity" of Christianity, America, and Democracy. In 1900 Charles Ferguson, an Episcopal theologian, wrote *The Religion of Democracy*, arguing that the universal expansion of the "moral empire of democracy" required the establishment of a "democratic catholic church" to carry the message to the far corners of a benighted world. But one need not go back so far. Will Herberg's book of 1955, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, excoriated American religion for its captivity to the American Way of Life and America's purposes in the world. Establishment religion had in fact become a "civic religion" which possessed no higher vision than the blessing of democracy, free enterprise, and the "crusade" against Communism:

> In a more directly political sense, this religiosity very easily comes to serve as a spiritual reinforcement of national self-righteousness and a spiritual authentication of national self-will. Americans possess a passionate awareness of their power and of the justice of the cause in which it is employed. The temptation is therefore particularly strong to identify the American cause with the cause of God, and to convert our immense and undeniable moral superiority over Communist tyranny into pretensions to unqualified wisdom and virtue. . . . In its crudest form, this identification of religion with national purpose generates a kind of national messianism which sees it as the vocation of America to bring the American Way of Life, compounded almost equally of democracy and free enterprise, to every corner of the globe; in more mitigated versions, it sees God as the champion of America, endorsing American purposes, and sustaining American might.

Herberg was far from being alone in this judgment of establishment religion. Such criticism of religion's uncritical Americanism was a staple of enlightened writing in the 1950's and early 1960's. Before he died, Herberg would have occasion to protest the misinterpretation of his call for religion to disenthrall itself from the American dream and assert its capacities for "prophetic" judgment. It soon became obvious that those who took charge of prophetic programs did not share Herberg's confidence in "our immense and undeniable moral superiority over Communist tyranny." At one level, the religiosity criticized by Herberg would seem to be the opposite of today's religious sentiments: America is the number-one enemy of peace and justice in the world; salvation is to be found through solidarity with the poor and oppressed in their struggle against the oppressors (meaning the Third World against the First); the task of the Church is to get America on the right side of the global revolution; and so forth. At another level, Herberg's criticism is still valid. The messianism is the same, there has simply been a dramatic reversal of content. Then and now the powerful utopian streak in American religion asserts that peace and justice are attainable if we have but the religiously-inspired political will to overcome their enemies. Then the enemies of peace and justice were thought to be the enemies of America. Now America is the enemy. In this new staging of the drama of world-historical change, America has reversed roles. Both illusions, that America is either the embodiment of or the obstruction to messianic hope, Herberg would complain, betray an absence of "the sense of transcendence" which is the mark of authentic biblical religion.

American Protestantism in particular has seldom been able to sustain a sense of transcendence that keeps all political actors under critical judgment. To say that all are under judgment does not mean, of course, that all actors and options are judged to be of equal moral merit. Distinctions are in order, and sometimes they must be drawn very sharply. What is never in order, however, is the equation of any worldly cause with the absolute purposes of God in history. For a relatively brief time—from the late 1930's through the 1950's—proponents of "Christian realism," most notably Reinhold Niebuhr, effectively articulated this sense of transcendence and the awareness of moral ambiguity which it entails. To be sure, the Niebuhrian argument against the affable gospel of pacifism and progress was powerfully assisted by World War II. The reality of Adolf Hitler even prompted some theologians to ponder anew the intractable nature of evil in the human condition. The doctrine of original sin, which alone among Christian doctrines is subject to irrefutable empirical verification, was for a time rehabilitated. But only for a time. In the decade after the war, the utopian streak surfaced again in the marriage of Americanism and God's will which was so deservedly criticized by Herberg and others.

The marriage was soon to end in a particularly nasty divorce. The McCarthy phenomenon was an important factor. As mainline institutions such as the National Council of Churches were assaulted for being "soft on Communism," it became the mark of moral courage to be called subversive. The Presbyterian leader and later head of the World Council of Churches, Eugene Carson Blake, was fond of saying at the time, "Be there a man with soul so dead, who never has been called a red." Still today among mainline leaders sightings of the ghost of Senator Joseph McCarthy are an almost daily occurrence. Even the most careful criticism of that establishment promptly provokes the invocation of his presence. His is the spectral energy, it is said, that moves people to point out that

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the mainline typically softpedals religious repression in the Soviet Union, excuses it in Cuba, and denies it in Nicaragua. Why else, if it is not the work of McCarthy, would anyone question the way in which mainline institutions have become apologists for the oppressions of the Left and give aid and comfort to the persecutors of the church of Christ? In recent years such questioning has become sharper and is frequently voiced by credentialed liberals who one might think are not easily dismissible. But it is in fact easy to dismiss them if you have the ghost of Joseph McCarthy working for you. Perhaps it is for his sins that that most earnest Catholic has been consigned to a purgatory of haunting the halls of the Protestant establishment.

But McCarthyism was far from being the only factor in the bitter break-up of the thoughtless marriage between the mainline and the American Way. There was in the 60's the "radicalization" of the civil-rights movement, in which it was revealed that reformist "band-aid" measures only obscured the "systemic evil" and "structural sins" of this kind of society. From 1967 onward, America's collaboration with alleged oppressors such as Israel could no longer be denied. And then there was Vietnam, always Vietnam. Vietnam uncovered a multitude of sins. As was often said at the time, "We are not fighting America's Vietnam war policy, we are fighting America's Vietnam *wars* policy." Our involvement in Central America is "another Vietnam." So also, however confusingly, our putative collaboration with apartheid in South Africa is "another Vietnam." Richard Nixon contrived merely the Vietnamization of the war; the religious mainline has achieved, at least conceptually, the Vietnamization of the world.

After the divorce, the mainline took up with the Third World. Such a union requires from Americans a considerable measure of self-denigration. But that is no great problem, since religious folk are practiced in the confession of sins. And it even has its pleasures when the sins to be confessed are not really our sins but the sins of those other Americans who are militaristic, materialistic, and callous to the core. Those in the churches who head the departments of prophetic utterance understand it to be their task to "afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted." It is further understood that Americans are the comfortable (except for blacks, Native Americans, women, and gays) and the rest of the world is the afflicted (mainly by America). The rest of the world, that is, barring those who are allied with America. Again, this is not, they insist, to be confused with anti-Americanism. It is, as they never weary of saying, simply a question of speaking truth to power. Prophetic truth-speaking, like charity, begins at home. And often ends there, since it would be presumptuous to criticize others when we have so many sins of our own.

The point is made that it is precisely the religious "sense of transcendence" which requires the Church to be "nonaligned" in the great power disputes of the present age. And if such nonalignment ends up serving the same purposes as are served by the nonalignment of, say, Fidel Castro, the answer is that the Church's responsibility is to bear witness and not to fret about the consequences. As one of our more celebrated prophets, paraphrasing the prophet Amos, regularly explains: "Our job is to call for justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. It is somebody else's job to work out the irrigation system." In 1968—a historical moment distinctly inhospitable to Niebuhrian sobrieties—a docent of the Harvard Divinity School and faithful servant of cultural moods made the argument that religious social actionists should move "beyond realism." As has subsequently been demonstrated, mainline Protestantism did not need much persuading to do that.

It is tempting to dismiss the church-and-society world of the mainline as a kind of sanctuary movement for the well-documented alienations of the 60's. Or one might compare it to a sandbox where bothersome children are kept occupied while grownups go about the serious business of figuring out how to make the world less unsafe for democracy and other good things. But such summary dismissal would, I believe, be a grave error. First—and this observation is required by more than charity—because there are leaders in these churches, and even some in their departments of prophetic utterance, who know that something has gone dreadfully wrong. They do not believe that the loss of millions of members can be attributed to right-wing reaction against their passion for justice. They are no longer comfortable when called upon to justify the roseate falsehoods told about totalitarians and would-be totalitarians. And, being only human, they are tired of looking ridiculous. They want once again to be taken seriously by serious people. They think that, given the chance, they might even have something to contribute to the discussion of irrigation systems.

The second reason the mainline cannot easily be dismissed is that it is still a formidable force in American life. In one respect, and even though it has declined dramatically in numbers and public credibility, it is more formidable than it was several decades ago. Social actionism has been institutionally entrenched and is backed by multi-million-dollar budgets which are largely buffered from accountability to the actual church membership. Much of the money was given many years ago by widows who wanted, for instance, to save souls in China and who do not need to be asked whether they now want it used to advance the revolution in Central America. As the last member walks out the church door, mumbling that there is too a difference between Marx and Jesus, the

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printing presses of the church-and-society curia will not miss a beat. And not only the printing presses, for there are many thousands of full- and part-time activists for whom the churches are an incomparably fruitful field in which to "network for peace and justice." Interviewed on why she stayed in the Catholic Church, theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether, fervent feminist and scourge of capitalist oppression, candidly replied that the Church has the xerox machines and you can't make a revolution without xerox machines. This is not to suggest that such people are not sincerely religious in their motivation. Regrettably, they are very sincere. As liberation theologians explain in books beyond numbering, true religion *is* the revolution.

The mention of Dr. Ruether, who is a Catholic, brings us to a third reason why the Protestant mainline should not be dismissed. The mainline is the very model of thoroughly Americanized religion. This is not incompatible with being anti-American. As other elites have also demonstrated, being anti-American is a very American way to be. An important and undecided question is whether that is the way of being American that the Catholic leadership will elect. Only in recent years have Catholics really begun to feel at home in American culture. Along with most evangelicals, they have until now been on the sidelines of culturally formative religion. Both parties have undergone a process of political consciousness-raising (they do talk that way) and on public issues are developing a striking resemblance to, say, United Methodists. Among both Catholics and evangelicals there are strong countervailing forces, however. Some of their more thoughtful leaders suspect that there might be more interesting things to do with their potential influence than joining up with the National Council of Churches in its dotage. It would seem a pity if evangelicals became indistinguishable from the mainliners who drove them into the cultural wilderness to begin with. And it would be an even greater pity if it should turn out that, just as America stops being anti-Catholic, Catholicism becomes anti-American.

AND so, in response to Elliot Cohen's question about how we have met the continuing threat of totalitarianism, the report from the Christian part of religious America is not entirely encouraging. To be sure, there is the powerful and still new phenomenon of moral majoritarianism and its enthusiasm for America's place in God's designs, but I have already devoted an essay to that subject in these pages.* Suffice it to say that, with respect to the contest between liberal democracy and its enemies, the moral majoritarians have yet to demonstrate convincingly that they understand why it is necessary to say *liberal* democracy.

* "What the Fundamentalists Want," May 1985.

The original question might be put in this form: in the last forty years has religious leadership supported the democratic project in a way that lends moral meaning to its purposes while keeping its pretensions under transcendent judgment? The answer, clearly, is no. Another question: can this nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated long endure without support and loyal opposition drawn from the binding truths and sacred symbols to which its people profess allegiance? The answer, I think, is no. And that is why my mind keeps turning to that dinner conversation of twenty years ago.

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Robert Nisbet: In at least one respect the American giant was somewhat flawed in strength before World War II ended. Although we were very good at recognizing the greater war, against Nazi Germany, we were less than good when it came to the second war, that waged by Stalin against the West. Stalin had been co-instigator, with Hitler, of the outbreak of war in 1939. The Nazi-Soviet pact and Stalin's quick seizure of a large part of Poland attested to that. He gloried in his partnership with Hitler and refused stubbornly at first to believe intelligence warnings, including one from Winston Churchill, that Hitler was preparing to attack Russia. When Hitler did launch his divisions and Stalin knew beyond further hope that Hitler had betrayed him, his grief seems to have been large. The Soviets fought valiantly against the Nazi troops, but only a romantic could have thought at the time that Stalin, merely because Hitler had jilted him, bore any good will toward the West.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, alas, was such a romantic. The recently published correspondence between Churchill and Roosevelt must make for bitter reading in some quarters. All that we had known in a general sort of way about Roosevelt's strong disposition to trust Stalin, even over Churchill's cautionary advice, is detailed richly in these letters. Roosevelt's credulity toward Stalin and his sometimes rather pathetic ignorance of political history and geopolitics were joined unfortunately to a complacent certainty that Stalin wanted only one thing out of the war: world peace and democracy. Incredibly, it was Churchill, not Stalin, about whom Roosevelt had doubts in this respect. He chided Churchill for being British and therefore wedded to imperial notions; such notions, in Roosevelt's view, made it difficult for

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Churchill to understand that a country like the Soviet Union could fight valiantly without any thought of territorial aggrandizement. Roosevelt thought Stalin was, deep down, just folks, and that he would have no trouble working with Stalin toward peace and democracy after the war.

Roosevelt's colossal naiveté did not, alas, die with him. What became a forty-year persuasion within the American public was the immediate legacy of this naiveté. Within this persuasion Great Britain could be excoriated for leading the Greek government to repulse the Communist-led ELAS in Greece, whereas mild wrist slaps were sufficient for the Soviet rigging of the Polish elections. The persuasion I write of has been strongest from the beginning in the universities, the churches, the *major media, and the entertainment industry.* But it is by no means confined there, any more than Roosevelt's undying popularity is. In many walks of life do we find alive and well the institutionalization of Roosevelt's unwavering faith in the Soviet Union.

At no time was this point of view toward the Soviet Union more evident than immediately after the war. We rushed pell-mell to demobilization, disarmament, termination of the draft, and other actions which had but one possible direction: American return to isolation, with Europe and much else of the world virtually handed over to the Soviets. What, it might be asked, stopped this mindless rush to impotence and oblivion by the U.S.? The answer is blunt: Soviet gluttony, so evident by the end of 1945 that there was no real alternative to our changing direction 180 degrees. The presence of Harry Truman in the White House—admirably different in this situation from what Roosevelt would have been—was also an important factor. But the real cause of American resistance, of a sudden, was simply Soviet gluttony for land and power on a scale so large that no one could be indifferent to it. "The irony," James Schlesinger has recently written, "is that it was the Soviet Union that brought America's precipitate withdrawal to an end—and thereby forfeited a heaven-sent opportunity."

To OUR credit we have, with only a few delinquencies, fought the cold war over forty years; or fought it as well as has been possible given the pro- or at least anti-anti-Soviet frame of mind in substantial parts of the American public. By 1950 there was a firm consensus in the leadership of both parties that not only must the Western democracies be protected, but also West Germany and Japan. Recognition of Israel was also firm by 1950. And it was understood too that American vigilance must be exercised on the periphery of the Soviet Union—in Iran, Greece, Turkey, and the Japanese outposts. Truman's superb decision in 1946 to send military aid to Greece and Turkey marked the first really significant break with American wartime indulgence of Stalin and the Soviets, and he was accordingly indicted as a warmonger by substantial segments of America's Soviet-persuasion. Much the same accompanied the restoration of the draft and the Berlin airlift.

Our nuclear superiority over the Soviets became large in the 1950's under Eisenhower; almost to a fault, though, since its Dulles-inspired reliance upon "massive retaliation" led us to a certain indifference to land power and conventional war that persists to this day. John F. Kennedy performed brilliantly in the Cuban missile crisis, but rather badly in Vietnam, first in the dispatching of 17,000 "advisers" from this country and second, and catastrophically, in deposing Ngo Dinh Diem. Richard Nixon produced a masterstroke in winning our way into China—historically the oldest *enemy of the Great Bear and therefore our natural* friend.

From the very beginning, though, American strategy has been opposed by the American Soviet-persuasion with its trust in the Politburo. Henry Wallace mounted his campaign for the Presidency in 1948 on the theme of such trust. He and his Communist advisers had, of course, no hope of winning; their real aim was to destroy Truman for his anti-Soviet actions, all the while declaring themselves the real inheritors of the Roosevelt escutcheon. Nothing quite like the Wallace affair has repeated itself, but George McGovern's bid for the Presidency had its full share of the credulous toward the Soviets. All the major American responses to Soviet aggressiveness, including, as noted, the Berlin airlift and aid in 1946 to Greece and Turkey, have evoked almost routine hand-wringing and sometimes harsh criticism from our anti-anti-Soviet persuasion. When the Soviets reached superiority in nuclear arms, the cry for a nuclear freeze rose almost immediately in this country. So daft could this element be at times that in the mid-1960's the "understanding" began to float in some official circles that the Soviet Union was trying, in a low-key way, to help the U.S. out of the Vietnam quagmire.

FOR a long time it was thought, quite understandably, that the persuasion I am writing about sprang from pacifism, from a befuddled though honorable philosophy in opposition to American assertiveness anywhere in the world. But within the last year we have discovered differently. It seems that while no sabers should ever be rattled at the Soviets, it is not only permitted but morally mandated that they be rattled at South Africa—through disinvestment, sanctions, and more. It is said that South Africa represents the recrudescence of Nazism in its oppression of one race by another. But such an indictment is a fatuous simplification of the current South African tragedy and an insult to, a desecration of, the victims of Nazism.

Apartheid is a misfortune at best, a tragedy at worst; withal it is the confused and from the be-

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ginning easily exploited—by outsiders—outcome of a unique history. Apartheid is already dissipating itself; it has been for some time. It is, at all events, a problem that can be settled only by South Africans. Certainly, the United States, with its all too recent history of exterminatory policies toward the American Indians, its belated abolition of slavery, and then its cruel, hundred-year neglect of blacks after slavery, is not, I submit, the ideal nation for taking the lead in action toward South Africa that goes much beyond what President Reagan has called "constructive engagement." Despite the scorn heaped upon this policy by the press, the universities, Congress, and many others, it is the only proper course of action to take when one is dealing, as we are, with a valued ally. There are, and have been for some time, changes occurring in the South African economy, social order, and polity which are clearly anti-apartheid in character. And they are irreversible unless we and other Western countries force that country into stubbornness and calculated reversal.

The forty-year old Soviet-persuasion in our midst is of course eager for war with South Africa. I use the word war advisedly. Clausewitz taught us that there are at least four types or stages of war: diplomatic, economic, psychological, and military. Under the pressure of American black leaders and others, many others, Congress is engaged in an escalation of the war against South Africa.

We thus find ourselves with a war party on our hands. Almost to the last person it is composed of those who have for four decades wrung their hands at the slightest thought of a show of strength to the Soviets. They know that South Africa is the implacable foe of the Soviet Union and constituted by its strong economy and substantial military forces to be the bulwark against Soviet command of Africa and much else.

Too many of even our alert minds seem lacking in appreciation of the Soviet Union as a land power. A mesmerized, though understandable, concentration upon nuclear war is no doubt responsible, but it is not the less dangerous for that. The great British geographer and founder of modern geopolitics, Sir Halford Mackinder, was the first to point out to the West the potential menace that was formed by Russian occupation of what he called first the "geographical pivot of history" and later the "Heartland of Eurasia." Such geographical position, Mackinder asserted, is, when united with a population of military quality, the potential master of the "World Island"—that is, the rest of Asia to the East, the Middle East, Africa, and India, and, with the strategically valuable aid of Germany, all Western Europe. In 1943, at the height of World War II, Mackinder restated his thesis and declared that "If the Soviet Union emerges from this war as the conqueror of Germany, she must rank as the greatest land power on the globe." Stalin had excellent reason to dream of all Germany, but he got only the eastern part.

West Germany is thus fully as vital to us in Europe as South Africa is to us with respect to the sea lanes around the Cape, as Japan and the Philippines are to us in the western outposts of the Pacific, and as Israel is to us in the Middle East. These are among our allies, and we estrange them at our own national peril. Last spring some of the fortieth-anniversary observances of the end of World War II threatened, albeit briefly, to awaken memories of former tyrannies and thus take our eyes off present ones. The ways of allies are never easy, but a little quick geopolitics and review of Leninism's long record of savagery in Russia and the world should remind us that the way to the future is through the present, not the past.

For all reasons I hope for an early achievement of a mutual nuclear deterrence that satisfies us. Concentration upon nuclear war, while necessary, runs the risk of taking our minds off the weapons and strategies of conventional war: war on land, sea, and in the air. It would be tragedy tinctured by irony if, under the umbrella of sustained nuclear talks, the Soviets got what they wanted through military strike forces—the kind we sorely lack.

Our record in land warfare hasn't been lustrous. Forgetting Vietnam, there is still little to feel comfortable about. In some ways Grenada was even more depressing than the badly mishandled Desert One effort in Iran. For, unlike that complete and primal disaster, Grenada was celebrated as almost a famous victory. Thousands of decorations were given out. "Well-dones" were enthusiastically flashed to the fleet. Presumably the already grossly inflated number of admirals was inflated a little bit more as reward for valiant service. But after reading Edward N. Luttwak's brilliant analysis of Grenada, it is hard to know just what all the tumult and cheering were about. Half the tiny island was given to the navy, the other half to the army and air force, for the micro-operation. There were several hundred Cuban expatriates, about a hundred of them armed. Where, for such a cameo operation, were our widely hailed Rapid Deployment Forces, that is, one or two of them?

Our conventional-warfare capability clearly leaves much to be desired. The Pentagon, on all accounts, has become a twisted, tortuous maze of commands and subcommands, cross-commands, and overlaps. If quick decision were needed, where could it come from? We strain credulity and citizen patience by building a navy ostensibly aiming at a second Midway instead of geopolitical military realities. Brent Scowcroft astutely notes: "The critical areas of competition between us and the Soviet Union are around the Eurasian land mass. We don't have the luxury of fighting at sea if the problem is on the land."

Intellectuals mourn "the death of socialism" in

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the 20th century. In truth it is the death of the national state they should be attending to. Socialism above the level of the kibbutz or commune is only an extrusion of the modern state: into social welfare as contrasted with justice, defense, trade, etc. The problem created by the moribund state should be our concern, the more especially in a world dominated by a super-military colossus like the Soviet Union. The national state has declined ever since World War I's horrendous slaughter in the trenches, nation against nation. It is noteworthy that World War II was fought pretty much as Woodrow Wilson would have loved: as a war of creeds. It was the Four Freedoms vs. Totalitarian Despotism. The presence of the Soviets among the Four Freedoms constituted a kind of fox-in-the-henyard situation but, as I have noted, FDR was fully up to it.

The calculated, often mindless, break-up of old empires after each of the two world wars had the effect of casting upon the world tribes, castes, religions, and races in their new comic dress of national states. What was expected was something along the line of a series of nice, quiet, democratic Switzerlands. What we have gotten are for the most part Ugandas, Nigerias, Syrias, and Vietnams. They have this advantage at the moment: they are vivid previews of what South Africa will be if a black majority gets the one-man, one-vote nightmare that our liberals are calling for there.

BUT it is not simply the moribundity of the state as export commodity in the Third World: moribundity seems to me visible in the West, not overlooking the U.S. America is a patently less national political structure than it was even a half-century ago. I am not altogether lamenting here; I have never been fond of the political state and its cancerous bureaucracies in society. But national culture is, or was, all we have. There is not, alas, that wonderful international community which, it was once said, would dissolve all animosities on earth.

In our rage to denationalization, we quite recently, through the Antitrust Division and a federal judge, broke up the greatest national communications system in the world. We have seen the national parameters of our economy steadily erode and fade. Once they were strong even under governments dedicated to all-out laissez-faire in the economy. The multinational corporations have weakened these national parameters. Even more deadly will be the consequences of foreign countries like Japan entering the U.S. as, effectively, American proprietors and landowners. Our consumers will love it, of course. Our borders are in tatters, and we shall be lucky if we escape as only a two-language nation. With wide intermarriage native American genetic stock will almost certainly improve. But not our last rampart, the American national state.

The moribundity of the state contributes strongly of course to the rise of both guerrilla fighters and terrorists. Nothing inflames revolution and revolt like the sight of a decaying structure of authority. No other reason, on the evidence of much history, is really needed for explanation, whether it be czarist Russia or Batista's Cuba. Ideologies are at best incentives but always, in the last analysis, diversions. We have not yet found a tactics, a strategy, or a foreign policy for dealing with terrorists abroad. And such is the mesmeric attraction of the U.S., the Satan of the Islamic world, that we may be assured in advance that a steady diet of terror lies ahead. We are irresistible whether as individual businessmen and diplomats or as passengers on a commercial jet. Crude retaliation by the bombing of thousands of innocent civilians in a Lebanon or Syria is ineffectual to begin with and certain to turn the stomach of America.

A FINAL note: our enemy is not, *pace* President Reagan, totalitarianism or world Communism. It is the Soviet Union and of course its minions. Little Albania is a Communist totalitarianism. Anybody for Albania? China is also a Communist totalitarianism. China hates all manifestations of Russia. Surely, with memory activated by elementary geopolitics and thought of Soviet command of the Heartland and World Island, we don't want to ruffle Chinese sensibilities. It is our very final, last great hope of an ally on earth potentially up to its neighbor, the Soviet Union, in conventional warfare.

Also we can learn from China's ancient and riveting hatred of Russia—a hatred that persists through all seasons. The essential point for us to know is that even if the Soviet Union were to be promoted by our political analysts to the state of authoritarian rather than totalitarian rule, or even for that matter to the condition of Napoleonic plebiscitary military democracy, it would still be the most dangerous country in the world to the U.S. An aggressive, imperialistic, militant creed, Communism, belonging to a fierce and talented mass of people located in the world's strategic geopolitical heart, all guarantee that outlook for the U.S.

Tocqueville, in one of his spectacular divinations, wrote in 1835 that the U.S. and Russia were the two superpowers of the future, the first, Tocqueville said, born of the plowshare, the second of the sword. "Their starting point is different and their courses are not the same; yet each seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe." Merely update that to the entire globe!

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Michael Novak: Elliot Cohen's phrase, a "giant's strength," may be interpreted forty years later in three senses: absolute, relative, and psychological. Absolutely, the United States is more of a giant today—far wealthier and more powerful—than it was in 1945. Yet, relatively, other centers of power (the USSR, Japan, Western Europe) have gained enormous ground. For example, despite an absolute increase in domestic wealth and productivity between 1945 and 1985, the U.S. was then producing some 53 percent of the gross world product, but now only about 25 percent. Psychologically, the American political culture, by which I mean the ten million or so American opinion-makers and activists who take great interest in political issues, cannot fairly be described as showing a "giant's strength . . . in courage." Courage would not seem to be the moral quality either most sought after, or most given public praise, by the American political culture.

Just as during the 1930's the West allowed the totalitarian power of Nazi Germany to grow to disproportionate military dimensions, so also, during the 1970's, the totalitarian power of the Communist USSR was quietly allowed to grow to disproportionate military dimensions. Indeed, the greatest change since 1945 has been that much of the world now regards the USSR as one of the *two* "giants" in strength, a "superpower." One way to see this most sharply is to imagine oneself as a Soviet citizen, fifty years or so of age, reflecting on the USSR of his childhood and the USSR today.

In 1945, the USSR had no navy, to speak of. In 1983, its Pacific fleet alone (574 ships) is almost as numerous at the *entire* U.S. Navy (struggling to reach 600 ships). With more than 300 submarines operating in all oceans, the Red Navy has an underwater force far outnumbering Adolf Hitler's fifty U-boats at their highest destructive capacity. Who would have thought, in 1945, that all of Eastern Europe would soon be Soviet, and that in later years significant percentages of the population of Western Europe would vote with Communist parties substantially loyal to Moscow? Who would have thought, in 1950, that regimes in faraway Central America would pledge fealty to Moscow, and hold the great USA at bay as "fortress America," unable to resupply Europe until its primary sea lanes (by 1985 in the Caribbean) were opened? Who would have imagined Soviet astronauts and satellites in space? Who would have thought that ringing endorsements of the Communist pattern for a "New International Economic Order" would come to be regularly supported by a majority at the United Nations? A fifty-year-old Soviet citizen has reason for complacency.

Still, even the Soviet diplomats an American is likely to meet, both among higher and lower functionaries, have a remarkable respect for the United States—for our mental energy and inventiveness, above all. *Not*, however, for our strength of will. Some of them clearly believe that in the contest which arose from the ashes of World War II, the Soviets have already "won," except in the protracted endgame—"won" in terms of will, planning, organization, morale, current position, and momentum. A citizenry which lacks respect for the will of its adversary, while admiring its material façade, may be forgiven for its persevering optimism. Not by bread alone does Communism live.

ELLIOT COHEN's other phrase, the "arts of peaceful living," requires a distinction. It is one thing to be wise and artful in peace, when all the world desires peace; it is far harder when the cries for "Peace, Peace!" mask one side's unremitting hostility, aimed ultimately at the unconditional surrender of the other.

The fact that the USSR is *Communist* is decisive. Americans tend to understand by "ideology" a set of doctrines more or less out of touch with reality, and take comfort from the fact that Communist leaders habitually show themselves to be "pragmatic." This is an intellectual error of colossal proportions. For Communism is essentially an ideology of power. Being "pragmatic," facing facts, cutting losses, being conciliatory, and a wide range of other behaviors, useful as occasion demands, are necessary instruments in the struggle for power. Native cunning, basic shrewdness, hearty backslaps, and apparent pragmatism do not *contradict* an ideology of power; they are its necessary underpinnings.

It is not only the case that principled Communist leaders despise liberty in all its works and pomps. They are fatally allergic to it. They must quarantine it. They must eradicate it. No virus is as deadly to the self-identity of Communism. To threaten Communist states with liberty is not to "inconvenience" them, it is to inject antibodies that attack brain, blood, tissue, and ligatures.

What possible "arts" are there for "peaceful living" with Communism? In world affairs, democratic-capitalist nations can live with an attitude of laissez-faire; it is little concern of ours if some nations wish to live under hopelessly backward systems of political economy. Communism by contrast is not, and cannot be, content with laissez-faire. This asymmetry presents a torturous difficulty.

In one sense, the atomic bomb and its *sequelae* have made the task of the USSR far easier than it might otherwise have been. Once the Soviets *also* acquired the bomb (not without deceit and expert penetration), the territorial integrity of the USSR and its extended empire came to be assured. In an earlier era of purely conventional arms, the West might well have threatened Soviet hegemony at least in Hungary or Poland, Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia. With partisans of liberty within, and the proximity of Western armies without, one after another of the Soviet colonies in Europe

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might have escaped back into European unity. In historical reality, the bomb rendered any such offensive from the West null and void.

In another sense, more than any other single factor, the bomb made the USSR a "superpower." Suppose the number of divisions in the Red Army even higher than at present; suppose their tanks even more numerous; suppose the armadas of the Red Air Force even more vast—all these, alone, would not have sufficed to make the USSR a "superpower." A great, even unprecedentedly strong, land power, to be sure; but a threat mainly to its nearest neighbors. What, fundamentally, holds the courage of the West in check is fear of nuclear war. To very few contemporary peoples is Soviet society attractive; the might of the bomb induces such respect as the USSR has attained—the bomb, and the USSR's resolute will to win.

Thus, Elliot Cohen's "ultimate challenge," the bomb, has altered beyond all recognition the meaning of his seemingly quaint phrase, "the arts of peaceful living." It was hard enough to keep Europe at peace during the era of conventional weapons. Ironically, it is far harder with the bomb. True, Europe has now enjoyed a longer period without a major war than at any time during the past two centuries. But we say "peace," when there is no peace. Beneath the surface, Europe is locked in a deadly war, with consequences every bit as grim as in the Nazi period. Today, though, it is harder to *see* the war, to diagnose its subterranean methods, to measure its ebbs and tides, to assess its deadly battle lines. It is being fought daily through poisonings, through disinformation, through lies and propaganda, through secret agents of espionage, through hidden "agents of influence" and "useful idiots," through drugs and weapons and terrorist bombings, through character assassination and assaults upon the morale of entire peoples. On nothing does the USSR spend more energy and imagination than on this hidden war.

This battle line is not Europe's alone. Serious journalists tell us that in some regions of El Salvador Communists have been organizing for thirty years, and have plunged the deepest possible roots into certain sectors of that nation. The current containment of the armed guerrilla bands should not mislead us as to the depth of hostile organization. *Organization* is the great strength of Communists. As in El Salvador, so in many parts of the world.

In such a world, how does a free people discover the "arts of peaceful living"? No university in the West prepares its students for the methods actually being employed against our civilization. Through which "arts," then, shall we defend ourselves? One fears that so many of our arts, invented for more ordinary times, weaken us.

THE "massacre of innocents" is, alas, still with us. Neither nature nor nature's God commands that so many millions should be starving in Africa. How to grow food in abundance, how to make even deserts bloom, are secrets well known to humankind. There is really no excuse for famine; yet famine is still contrived, deliberately or inadvertently, by state officials. I leave aside the horrors of Afghanistan, the annihilation of nearly half the population of Cambodia, the constant threat against Israel, the daily assaults by terrorists, guerrillas, and rebels of all kinds.

Especially here, however, lies hidden within America's political culture an egregious lack of moral clarity. Nobody ever said that liberty can be won bloodlessly; it was not so won in the United States, during 1776-81, or in Lincoln's savage Civil War of 1861-65. An immense moral difference is involved in the question whether the bearing of arms is for liberty—or not. For distinguishing among armed struggles, a "good cause" remains a primary test. To say, "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter," is entirely to abandon critical thought. Some so-called "terrorists" do not kill innocents indiscriminately. Conversely, not all terrorists *are* fighting for freedom. Some certainly may, and do, have other purposes. No such purpose is as worthy of human beings as liberty.

Permit me to describe the following facts so: in El Salvador, the rebels are *not* fighting for liberty but for the purpose of building a Marxist state; in Nicaragua, the rebels are fighting for exactly the reverse. If the reader does not agree with this description, then we have an argument concerning fact. I trust, though, that the moral *principle* is clear enough: to fight for the institutions of liberty is not only moral but (all else being equal) morally obligatory. Whereas, to fight to suppress institutions of liberty is immoral. And please note: I do *not* mean immoral in an ethnocentric sense, because "we" happen to prefer liberty. I mean immoral because contrary to the nature of moral choice itself. No one can morally attack institutions of moral choice.

THE worst failure of American political culture since 1945, in short, has been a failure of moral intellect. Tides of moral relativism, self-loathing, and the reduction of moral judgment to emotional proclamation have worn down the very citadel of liberty itself, the human mind.

The first acts of moral man are clear discernment, reasoned judgment, and courageous choice. Elliot Cohen described the America of 1945 as possessed of a "giant's strength . . . in courage." He meant, surely, discernment of reality as it was, a reasoned judgment about what needed to be done, and then faithful and courageous execution. How can anyone be courageous when discernment is no longer clear? How can anyone distinguish among many possible discernments without reasoned judgment? And how can anyone persevere, in the face of forbidding obstacles, merely on the

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basis of emotion? The *rational* basis of our moral persistence is today in peril.

Earlier, I accepted the convention that the Communist USSR is a "giant." Giant it is not, either in moral purpose or in the arts of civilization, but solely in arms and in subversion. These alone do not a giant make, although they do portend a formidable foe. An empire based upon lies is at war with itself; as a moral proposition, the USSR will not stand. Long before its fall, however, it may inherit the earth.

FINALLY, while I have been describing important and perhaps even dominant moral tendencies in our political culture, there is strong reason to believe that the moral clarity of the American people is sharper than that of American elites. Further, there is some reason to believe that a moral rejuvenation has begun, certainly among the young, and that this nation may be entering a "moral awakening" not unlike that of the period after 1830. Our hope must be to establish these energies upon as intelligent, critical, and reasoned a moral basis as we can, so that "moral awakening" and "enlightenment" shall walk hand in hand, with the Law being a light unto our feet.

For such a purpose, Elliot Cohen edited COMMENTARY.

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William Phillips: These are, indeed, large and difficult questions, the answers to which we may not know conclusively for at least several decades. Right now there are too many uncertainties and imponderables. And if we have learned anything from all the mistaken analyses and predictions in the past, it is that in trying to decipher the enigmas of history a certain amount of humility is required.

Still, some things are clear. We have had low points. But we have not had a nuclear war, or any crippling crises in America or Europe. On the other hand, American industry has not been growing sufficiently, and any attempt to defend America's interests—and democratic values abroad—particularly since Vietnam, has faced a mounting tide of criticism. Fascism has not been on the rise, but Soviet influence has spread to a number of countries. On balance, both the optimists and the pessimists have their claims, while those of us who like to think of ourselves as realists have mixed views.

One of the difficulties in discussing how America has met its challenges is that since World War II traditional political assumptions and terms have been turned around. There are many reasons for this shift, but much of it is due to the exploitation of radical politics by the Soviet Union and the Communist parties around the world. One result is that the "Left" today bears only a superficial resemblance to what once was the Left. And any concern over Soviet totalitarianism and its victims, by people who are clearly not conservative in the accepted sense of the term, is nevertheless dismissed as conservative.

To add to the confusion, the incessant babble of the media has all but numbed people's ability to think. Every question is chewed to a pulp by an endless procession of commentators and "experts" airing their biases, whose ideological certainty is in direct proportion to their misinformation. No wonder that in this intellectual climate political discourse obscures more questions than it clarifies.

BUT to answer Elliot Cohen's disquieting questions more concretely:

How have we done in applying our strengths to the "arts of peaceful living"? Most of the statistics I have seen and my own sense of things lead me to believe that the "domestic situation," if not improving, certainly has not gotten worse. There are areas of poverty, but the middle class and skilled workers appear to be living high. Nevertheless, some economists point to the deficit as a serious problem. And as everyone is aware, the economy is somewhat unbalanced: services and technology are booming, while basic industry has slowed down.

Many reasons for this situation have been cited. But it seems to me that the trouble comes partly from the nature of democracy, which does not permit sufficient restriction on both labor and industry, and partly from the greed both of the organized working class and of big business. In this respect, our system is in some ways more anarchist than capitalist. As has been pointed out, a sluggish economy cannot satisfy the insistence on high profits and low taxes together with enormous expenditures for both social welfare and defense. Those who favor social programs call for cuts in the defense budget; but though it is sometimes assumed that the money saved would be used for welfare measures, there is no guarantee of this. Besides, in this stormy period, it is unfortunately too risky to gamble with national security.

Democracy by definition is a system of compromises, but rampant self-interest and seemingly disinterested but ideologically motivated movements threaten to disrupt the system itself. It has been argued that only a dictatorial regime could impose the planning and regulations required to increase production, maintain adequate defense, and provide for proper welfare. But dictatorships have not been notable for either their efficiency or their

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humanity. Unfortunately, however, many zealots still have not learned to be wary of drastic solutions and utopian and apocalyptic visions that in the end produce the opposite of what they promise.

How have we managed the challenge of nuclear weapons? We all are aware of the enormously destructive power of the bomb, but the problem of controlling it has become a political football. Special interests, such as those of the neutralists, the pacifists, the disarmers, as well as those who fail to distinguish between the rhetoric of peace and the means of preserving it, have been particularly successful in confusing the issues. It is generally recognized by people who do not have some political ax to grind that first self-restraint and then deterrence so far have kept us out of a nuclear war.

We hardly need to be reminded that when we had overwhelming nuclear power we neither used nor threatened to use it. Democracies are the gentlemen of international affairs: they do not wield their strength to destroy or bully weaker nations—or even to gain desirable concessions. And now that the Soviets have reached parity—or superiority—our nuclear arsenal is sufficient to keep them from using theirs. The unilateralists and their sympathizers, however, would clearly upset the balance, as would the peace movements, for they are unable to exert any pressure on the Russians to disarm.

The European neutralists and pacifists are also threatening the peace by advocating a disarmed Europe that might be too inviting for the Russians to resist invading. Unfortunately, the alarmist propaganda of the peace movement has been so frightening that many people are seduced by the "better-red-than-dead" argument, despite the fact that it is precisely a strong America and Europe that can keep us from being either red or dead. Besides, the political motives of the one-sided disarmers are suspect, when one considers that they do not believe it is better to be black—that is, fascist—than dead.

Vague talk about disarmament is politically meaningless and deceptive, considering that both America and Russia have hundreds of times enough bombs to destroy the world over and over again. If this is the case, a partial reduction of missiles would be useless. Only their total elimination would remove the nuclear threat. But that is so utopian and impossible to enforce that we must look to other measures to ensure the prevention of nuclear war. Now, such a measure, the so-called "Star Wars," or Strategic Defense Initiative, has been proposed by the American government; but it has met with senseless political opposition and specious scientific arguments that have a palpable political bias. Scientifically, as has been pointed out by George Chapline, chief of research at the Laser Division of the Missile Defense System at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, nothing is impossible that does not violate the basic laws of physics. And according to Chapline, it looks as though the Star Wars defense system can be perfected in the next decade or two.

Common sense, which is often lacking in politics, also tells us that since the Russians have been developing a defense, it would be suicidal to abandon ours. The truth of the matter is that the only guarantee of peace is the maintenance of nuclear and conventional strength by the United States. One need scarcely speculate what would happen if the Russians were to achieve overwhelming superiority. And the only means available now for eliminating nuclear weapons seems to be the maligned and misunderstood Star Wars defense system. Moreover, as Henry Kissinger has pointed out (so far as I know, he is the only one to have made this interesting observation), a further reason for developing the defense system is that the policy of deterrence, which so far has worked, is now raising new questions. For according to Kissinger, the growing fear of nuclear war—partly natural, partly induced—might lead "the democratic publics . . . sooner or later [to] retreat to pacifism and unilateral disarmament."

More frightening, indeed, is the prospect of irresponsible nations, such as Libya or Syria, developing nuclear bombs, or of small terrorist groups getting hold of portable nuclear weapons. But even this threat of free-lance destruction may be contained, if, as I understand, the technology to counter such terrorist use of nuclear missiles is available. It may be that for every force nature provides a counterforce, and that technology, which the political doomsters say will destroy our civilization, may in the end save it.

THE third challenge—the threat of totalitarianism—is at least as potent, perhaps more so, than the military one. Indeed, sometimes it seems as though the terrifying spectacle of a nuclear war, which is remote, serves to distract us from the immediate political forces that disrupt the life of the West.

It should be evident to anyone not allergic to political reality that since the end of World War II, the course of modern politics has been set by the Soviet Union. Not only has its existence been the dominant factor in our political life, but its usurping and perverting of the socialist ideal has turned contemporary politics upside down. Thus the radical tradition has been converted into an instrument for serving the Russian national interest and for weakening, not Communizing, the West. How successful it has been, or conversely, how successfully we have met this new threat, is difficult to say. Soviet political expansion has been limited, though outposts of Russian influence have appeared in Central America, and our ability—overall—to resist Soviet machinations has been undermined, particularly because of Viet-

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nam, by resistance to American intervention—political as well as military—anywhere in the world.

In any event, there is reason to believe that the main threat right now to the West is political, not military. It is the mind of America and Europe that has been the actual battleground. Russian military power is of course a lurking threat, but in this period, aside from Afghanistan, the Soviet Union does not appear to want to engage in any military adventures—though it does nibble away at the rest of the world and takes what it can get without too much risk. Its policy is largely pragmatic and cautious, and so far as one can tell, its chief aim is mainly to break down Europe politically—that is, to neutralize and disarm it. With a neutral and impotent Europe, the Russian calculation would seem to be that its power relative to American power would be immensely increased. So far as one can tell, the last thing the Russians want in Europe is a "Communist" revolution—or coup—for that would probably create a new power, particularly in combination with the occupied Eastern countries, capable of challenging the Soviet Union. Hence Russia apparently feels it essential to avoid at all costs a strong, independent Europe in the West, as well as a China growing more powerful in the East.

To NEUTRALIZE and disarm Europe, the Soviet Union has been counting not on its own Communist parties but on the seemingly indigenous pacifist and disarmament movements, which probably constitute the only force that could accomplish what the Communist parties alone cannot. Unfortunately for the Russians, however, the French so far seem to be immune to the soothing rhetoric of disarmament; though, probably for domestic as well as ideological reasons, they continue to be wary of being too pro-American. But the Greens and other neutralists in Germany—and to a lesser extent the unilateralist British Labor party—have had some effect in slowing down the rearmament of their countries.

The specific forms these movements have taken, it should be noted, for the most part have not been to support explicitly the policies and interests of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, many German radical intellectuals, who espouse one or another kind of disarmament, are, at least on the surface, anti-Soviet. Nor do they have any illusions about the totalitarian nature of the Soviet regime. Some argue that both America and Russia represent different forms of imperialism, and that Germany must go its own way. Others are simply so alienated from their own country, because of its fascist past, that they are not interested in rebuilding German power to resist Soviet aggression. In addition, many of them insist that the ravages of war are too awful to contemplate again, and that almost anything is preferable to war. Obviously, this is a very potent argument, for no sane person can wish another war on Germany, on German soil—or anywhere else.

It would be a mistake to think of neutralism and pacifism as political aberrations; they are part of a *mind set*, a total system of beliefs and assumptions. In this respect, they are mostly, at least in origin, rooted in the intelligentsia. For example, though intellectuals and academics in Germany are not necessarily Marxists—any more than reactionaries are necessarily Nazis—they have absorbed so many of the ideas and so much of the language of Marxism that their thinking is colored by it. On the other hand, genuine nationalism and unequivocal opposition to the Soviet Union come mainly from the common people, to a large extent from the less-educated classes who are tinged often with retrograde attitudes and vestiges of Nazism. This in itself serves as an argument for neutralism and pacifism, for rearmament is associated with nationalism—and hence with Nazism—though, in my opinion, the danger is inflated. In any case, a feeling of guilt is so widespread that any revival of a national consciousness is suspect.

QUESTIONS have been raised about the source of these pacifist stands. There is some evidence of Communist funding and infiltration, but not enough to prove that they are merely a Soviet creation. Nevertheless, one still has to ask why indigenous, non-Communist movements should always move in one direction, when in fact a variety of political choices are open to them. Clearly, much of the political wind is blowing from the East.

But there is also another partial explanation for these political trends. For more than a century, being on the "Left," or "*gauchiste*" as they say in France, has implied some kind of moral superiority, regardless of the merit of any "Left" position. And even after the Soviet Union has been recognized widely as a totalitarian state, the "Left" has retained its progressive image.

I have been referring to the "Left" in quotation marks, however, because it should be clear by now that much of the so-called "Left" has little to do with the ideas of the traditional Left. And it is one of the unfortunate ironies of history that a large part of the "Left" today, which is neither revolutionary, nor genuinely international, nor supportive of progressive forces that are anti-Communist—that such a "Left" or "radical" movement should be identified with earlier radical ideas and should command the respect of liberals and decent people all over the world. For example, there is nothing intrinsically radical in being hostile to Israel or in supporting semi-fascist, nationalist movements and regimes in the Middle East, in the name of Third Worldism—itself, as Peter Berger has pointed out, an ideological invention that has been linked with liberal and humanitarian principles.

To be sure, not all of the "Left" is of a piece, and important distinctions must be made. By and

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large, independent socialists and some of the parties allied with the Socialist International should not be lumped with the mass of liberal and "Left" opinion that is neither socialist nor Communist but generally reflects—mindlessly—the fashionable "radical" attitudes of the day. Socialists vary from country to country and a number of them are sophisticated anti-Communists. Still, many of the official socialists, particularly in Germany, are not free of the popular ideology that has been associated with the "Left."

This current leftist tide also has reached the American political scene, but in a watered-down and somewhat different form. Here, it appears mostly as an opposition to armaments and a generalized feeling that the Soviet threat and that of its outposts in Latin America are vastly exaggerated. These attitudes are supported by many non-Communist and anti-Communist liberals and democrats, and even by a number of conservatives. To some extent, they have penetrated popular opinion and reached even into Congress. But their influence still is felt largely among writers and academics, and in the media.

In general, the political shift we have been witnessing is limited to a minority and never may become any larger. But it does affect the media, government opinion, and, ultimately, foreign-policy decisions. Whether this will weaken the West in any decisive way is impossible to tell at this point. But there are more immediately undesirable effects, for the ideological struggle has led to a polarization of opinion. The "leftist" turn has produced a "rightist" response, which on a more popular level can lead to retrograde positions. Failures of foreign policy, which would be blamed on the liberals, might produce an even greater backlash. If Europe, for instance, should detach itself from the Western alliance, or several other Central or South American countries should enter the Soviet orbit, then the call for a militarized, Fortress America might become very attractive to large numbers of people. And this, in turn, might foster the growth of more extreme, reactionary parties in America. If this were to happen, someone like Ronald Reagan, for example, might be dismissed as a liberal pussycat.

WHAT then is the solution? Or, perhaps, we should ask: is there a solution? Let us first consider the obstacles—not all of which come from the new form of "Left" opinion I have been describing. Jean-François Revel, for example, argues quite persuasively that the very nature of democracy is such as to make it difficult, if not impossible, to create an integrated national consciousness. There are too many conflicting interests, too many opportunistic and false prophets, too little concern for a national interest. Also, as even some conservatives have pointed out, business, especially big business, places profits or at least immediate gain over long-term political considerations. And, perhaps most important, it is no secret that America has not been able to generate a coherent and consistent view of foreign policy. Whether it is in the nature of democracy, or whether it is characteristically American—or both—is hard to know, but the fact is that the American approach to foreign affairs has been narrowly pragmatic and amateurish.

The large question of what the future will bring remains to be considered—if not answered. To be sure, I have been looking at the dark side of the picture. Nevertheless, there are indications that the future may not be black. For reasons not always clear—perhaps traceable to the frontier psychology—in critical times America has been able to mobilize its large resources, while the Soviet Union's extravagant military build-up, according to some observers, rests on shaky economic and social foundations. Moreover, the Eastern satellite countries are sources of rebellion against Soviet domination, particularly if they ever acted in concert. Europe, too, so far has not succumbed to internal and external pressures to abandon its own defense.

The ideological problem also may be surmountable. Part of the difficulty, as I have indicated, lies in the fact that anti-Communist views are associated in many quarters with ideas regarded as reactionary. And some conservatives have facilitated this kind of amalgam by advocating domestic policies that liberals find easy to denounce. Yet there is no reason, it seems to me, why a position that recognizes the threat of totalitarianism should not be one that also advocates progressive domestic policies. In fact, such was the position of the late Senator Henry Jackson. My own feeling is that a moderate point of view avoiding political extremes might be most effective in countering the fashionable peace movements. But I must admit that so far such an approach has not met with any spectacular success.

CLEARLY, it is not an easy matter to cope with the problems and threats confronting us in a distorted ideological situation created by the reversals of traditional politics. It demands a reexamination of the questions as well as the answers. One of the main needs is to combine the concern over domestic questions assumed to be the property of liberals and radicals with the definite necessity for national security and the defense of the West that has been recognized more clearly by conservatives. Admittedly, however, this is a formidable task, and, who knows, might require a revolution in thinking of the kind that in the past accompanied large historical changes.

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Richard Pipes: Elliot Cohen displayed great perspicacity in the way he defined the issues that would confront the postwar world. In my view, America's record in meeting the responsibilities that have faced it since 1945 has been a mixed one: not as good as it might have been, given America's wealth and power, but not as bad as those who think in terms of ideals rather than realities like to believe. It stuns the imagination to contemplate what the modern world would have been without the United States: it has almost always represented a force making for greater stability and freedom, and an agent for spreading the kind of prosperity that used to be considered uniquely American. Its failures have stemmed primarily from the two-dimensionality of American culture, its persistent insularity, with its shallow liberalism and positivism and the related unwillingness to acknowledge (at any rate, psychologically) the existence of different mentalities. Curiously, the liberal culture of the United States has made possible immense successes at home, while causing many failures abroad, whereas the more sophisticated but inherently illiberal, violent philosophy of the Communists, has produced the opposite effect: successes abroad, fiascos at home.

Has the "giant's strength" of the United States been as adequately applied to the "arts of peaceful living" as to the pursuit of war? The question seems to me unfairly posed. Every war effort is internally managed: it was entirely up to us to decide how to prepare for the war and how to wage it. Peace, however, is an international affair, with many protagonists, each of whom pursues his own interests. The art of peaceful living requires compromises, whereas the art of war does not: it speaks the unilateral language of force. It so happens that the principal rival of the United States in the postwar era has been a country that lacks the tradition of compromise and whose governing ideology precludes it, except as a tactical device. Furthermore, this rival has entirely different interests and aspirations. These realities have made the task of maintaining the peace incomparably more difficult through no fault of our own.

Even so, the United States could have done better in coping with the Soviet Union and its proxies had its leaders made an effort to understand that regime. They have never done so and one sometimes despairs whether their education and experience make them capable of grasping a political system so radically different from their own. From the moment the Bolsheviks seized power, Washington was at a loss what to make of them and their government. Although Russia's betrayal of its wartime alliance and the atrocities perpetrated by the Bolsheviks caused widespread revulsion, hardly anyone in a position to make decisions on such matters bothered to study Russia's past or to take seriously Bolshevik pronouncements. There never was, of course, any American effort to overthrow the Bolshevik regime as Churchill—and he was virtually alone—wanted to have done. At first we ignored the Bolsheviks. When pretending that they did not exist ceased to be feasible, we recognized them and then alternated between appeasement and threats.

Underlying our approach has been the traditional Western view that war and peace are antithetical, that when countries are not shooting at each other they are at peace. We have been quite unable to assimilate the view, which underpins the totalitarian outlook as well as practice, that conflict—in Russia's case, "class war"—is a permanent factor of history and though it need not take the form of a clash of arms, it will never cease until "classes" are abolished, i.e., Communism triumphs globally. This adversarial relationship is repugnant to Americans, who regard conflict and violence as marks of failure. The whole effort of our foreign policy has been to ignore Communist ideology and concentrate on achieving a "cooperative," "stable" relationship with Moscow, so as to create a favorable environment for global trade—which happens to be the very thing Mocow does not want. I doubt whether among the one hundred most influential persons in Washington under any administration there are as many as two or three who understand the source of our difficulty with the USSR, for whom the Soviet Union is neither a demon to be vanquished nor a victim to be accommodated, but a country run by people with their own values and objectives.

The Soviet Union since 1945 has been the prime cause of world instability not because it causes all of the world's problems but because it exacerbates and exploits them instead of seeking to resolve them. At the same time the United States has not helped matters by its persistent failure of understanding. In dealing with Soviet aggression, direct and indirect, military and political, we have failed to develop a strategy that avoids the extremes of John Foster Dulles's simplistic "massive retaliation" of the 1950's and Nixon's utopian "Basic Principles" of the 1970's. Even today, President Reagan and his National Security Adviser say one thing and the Secretary of State another, but none of them seems to take seriously what the Russian ruling elite says about itself and its vision of the world. I do not know how to overcome this persistent weakness of U.S. foreign policy: perhaps more history and more theory should be inculcated in our young so that when they attain maturity they will know in their bones that not all peoples are potential Americans and that, viewed dialectically, "peace" is not necessarily the antithesis of "war."

This said, one cannot ignore the immensely positive role which the United States has played in the postwar era. For one, it has successfully protected the sovereignty of West European countries and of other strategic areas, including Israel. It has also made possible, if only by opening its own markets,

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the unprecedented expansion of world trade that has brought to various social groups and nations riches beyond their ancestors' dreams. True, this enrichment has been largely confined to countries that either had been industrialized or had the ability to industrialize; to others, the suppliers of raw materials, the expansion of international commerce has often meant the breakdown of traditional social and economic orders with resultant chaos. Still, on balance, the world has been a better place in the second half of the 20th century under *Pax Americana* than it had been in the first, when responsibility for global management rested on Europe.

How have we handled the "ultimate challenge" of nuclear weapons? Here again, one must bear in mind that once the United States had lost the nuclear monopoly, which occurred shortly after Elliot Cohen had posed this question, the management of nuclear weapons ceased to be the exclusive responsibility of the United States. The U.S. had developed and employed nuclear weapons to expedite victory over Japan and to save hundreds of thousands of American lives. Originally, these weapons were meant as a shortcut to victory—a role they brilliantly fulfilled. After the war, as relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated, nuclear weapons appeared to Washington as a way of avoiding vast military outlays to match Soviet land armies: in other words, as a relatively cheap shortcut to military superiority. Once the Soviet Union developed its own nuclear capability, however, the mission of the American strategic stockpile was redefined again, this time to serve as a "deterrent" to a Soviet nuclear attack. Despite certain refinements introduced into our strategic doctrine under President Reagan, this remains U.S. policy. In other words, the U.S. has throughout viewed nuclear weapons as weapons distinct from and even counter to traditional ones: the very contrast between nuclear and conventional arms that underpins all American discussions of strategy attests to that.

Unfortunately, the Soviet leadership has approached the matter differently. As it does not draw a sharp distinction between war and peace, so it does not contrast nuclear and conventional weapons. Sometime in the late 1950's it decided to place nuclear missiles at the very center of Soviet military might, transforming the other branches—land, air, and naval—into auxiliary forces. Our cultural insularity (or is it arrogance?) has prevented us from coming to grips with this approach, with the result that we have persistently misunderstood as well as underestimated the Soviet nuclear build-up, and pursued arms-control negotiations in a strategic vacuum. American specialists for the most part believe that if worst came to worst and the U.S.-Soviet conflict led to the outbreak of hostilities, it would be possible—perhaps by means of unilateral declarations—to keep them confined to conventional arms. This view, in my opinion, is entirely unrealistic because it fails to take into account Soviet thinking and practices in this regard.

Still, we have not had nuclear missiles fired in anger, and it is not inconceivable that the very existence of nuclear arsenals on both sides has prevented a general war. To that extent, the "challenge" has been met. I recall that in the late 1940's it was widely believed a nuclear war was imminent. Although I was more sanguine than my fellow students at Harvard, my wife and I saved enough money to travel to Europe in the summer of 1948 to see perhaps for the last time the continent where both of us had been born. But Europe stands and prospers, so perhaps we have not done so badly, after all.

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Eugene V. Rostow: The questions posed in Elliot Cohen's manifesto for the first issue of COMMENTARY are characteristic of his mind and spirit. They are the questions of a man who was an idealist but not an ideologue, and go directly to the fundamental issues which distinguish a civilization from a culture. His third question encompasses the other two. All three concern different facets of the same general problem: man's propensity for aggression and how it can be dealt with in the interests of civilization. What he asks is whether the society of nations would be able to meet a challenge as destructive as that of the atomic bomb itself: the release and, for a time, the widespread acceptance of the instinct of insensate aggression symbolized for our times by Hitler and Stalin, Nazism and Bolshevism.

As Freud pointed out, particularly in *Civilization and Its Discontents,* the first and indispensable task of civilization is to control the aggressive instinct, and divert it into useful channels within a social structure of ordered peace: into sport and art and business competition and public service and the quest for justice, rather than murder, cruelty, massacre, and aggressive war. The discontents of civilization for the individual, Freud wrote, arise from the restraints society must impose on the aggressive instinct in order to become a civilization. The history of mankind is therefore the record, in ultimate terms, of an endless struggle between the forces of evil within every human personality and social aggregation ("the death wish"), and those of love and creativity, man's

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equally strong instinct to fulfill the vision of goodness which Freud identified with Eros and St. Paul.

The restraints through which Western civilization had long sought to curb aggressive behavior in international affairs were gravely weakened by World War I and by the inadequate peacekeeping efforts of the politicians charged with governing the state system during the interwar period. The prevalence of aggression in international behavior was paralleled by a comparable increase in crime and other aggressive behavior within most societies. What Elliot Cohen asked, in effect, was whether World War II would complete the process of liberating Caliban from his cave that was begun by World War I. Would the United States, acting "greatly," succeed in marshaling enough support throughout the world to create and maintain an improved and genuinely civilized system of international public order? Or was the world slipping inexorably into the hands of the thugs, despite the splendid Allied victory in 1945?

These were the questions which left Elliot Cohen rightly "troubled and hesitant before the glorious era of peace we have awaited so long." Because the Soviet Union was one of the victors in the war, the moral and political import of victory was ambiguous. Obviously, there would be no chance to achieve a world society worthy to be called a civilization unless the United States showed in peace the giant's imagination and strength it had shown in war. Without the weight of American power, and the inspiration of the American ethos, there was no hope for a decent peace. But even if the United States managed to sustain its energy, optimism, and clarity of purpose during the postwar period, could civilization prevail?

MY ANSWER to Elliot Cohen's first question is that the United States has been at least as strong and constructive a force in world politics since 1945 as it was during the war itself. Even the most heroic of heroes is capable of error, and the record of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the American government and people in perceiving, anticipating, and conducting World War II was far from perfect. Taking into account the difficulty, turbulence, and variety of the problems which had to be dealt with, and the state of Roosevelt's health, the record was marvelous. As President Roosevelt used to say, when his counselors complained of some particularly outrageous confusion in the life of wartime Washington, "If you think this is bad, you should have been here during the First War."

But history is no more tolerant of excuses than sport. In the perspective of history, one must conclude that America's wartime achievement was good, but could have been much better. I reach the same conclusion about American and Western foreign policy during the postwar period which is now coming to an end. Our foreign policy has been good, but it should have been much better. It was conceived on the scale of grand strategy, and its architectural structure, largely the work of President Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson, meets the test of Elliot Cohen's question: the American giant's strength was indeed mustered "greatly and wisely" to meet the tasks of peace as we then perceived them. The United States did not repeat its appalling performance of retreating into isolation and neutrality, as it did after 1920. Moreover, it successfully defied Tocqueville's famous dictum about the capacity of a democracy to carry out a consistent foreign policy. We have carried out a consistent foreign policy for forty taxing and difficult years, and we show no serious signs of abandoning the struggle despite its cost. For we know by now that there is no real alternative.

During that period, there have been fluctuations of course in the clarity with which the goals of our foreign policy have been understood and in the effectiveness with which they have been pursued. Some Presidents have been better than others. They have all faced political difficulties and some have faced political hurricanes of opposition to one or another feature of our foreign policy. Presidents Truman and Johnson withdrew from politics, Truman because of Korea and Johnson because of Vietnam, in order to allow the country to rally again behind the broad line of the policy we and the Western world have sought to fulfill since the late 40's.

How can that policy be described?

First and fundamentally, it was an attempt to reestablish order, like the peacemaking efforts after the Napoleonic wars and World War I. The notion of order animating the peacemakers of 1945 was not that of the iron fist. It was rather the conception of an open system of equally sovereign and autonomous states, governed by rules of international law they all respected, and committed to the realization through peaceful means of principles of justice they all professed to accept. These ideas had evolved from the experience of the European state system since the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and reflected its successes and failures.

The Vienna system, the system of the 19th-century Concert of Europe, governed world politics effectively for nearly a century. It collapsed in 1914 and was rebuilt within the framework of the League of Nations. During the 30's it collapsed again, and was again reformed and reestablished, this time under the Charter of the United Nations.

The major premise of the Vienna system and its successors was that the great powers were responsible for keeping the peace because they alone had the power to do so, and that all the other goals of their diplomacy should be subordinated to the overriding objective of peace. The notion that peace and the effectiveness of the system of inter-

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national cooperation for keeping the peace are the principal purposes of great-power foreign policy was the singular achievement of the statesmen of Vienna and their chief 19th-century successors. The acceptance of that principle as a practical working rule for governments marked an extraordinary change in world politics—a mutation, if not a miracle. It led to a pattern of great-power restraint and cooperation which prevented general war for a century. No great power sought to destroy or conquer another. The wars which did take place were limited as to scale and purpose. Machinery was developed for consultation and mediation. Compromise became the prevailing expectation when interests and ambitions were in conflict. As two young British historians recently commented: "For the most part the great powers respected each other's status: they were accustomed to a great-power system, and strove to maintain it. There was a constant and conscious fear that its demise would bring untold disasters to them all. This was perhaps the most permanent consequence of Napoleon's bid for the mastery of Europe."*

But after Sarajevo, the British Foreign Minister invoked the machinery of diplomatic conciliation which had defused so many crises throughout the 19th century. This time the Concert of Europe broke down under the pressure of Germany's ambition to dominate Europe. And the attempt to restore and improve the European Concert on a world scale under the League of Nations was stillborn. With the United States still in the grip of isolationist fantasies, and the Soviet position altogether equivocal, Great Britain and France, and particularly Great Britain, were uncertain about their capacity to head off Hitler's bid for mastery and the broader ambitions of the Axis powers.

THERE is no mystery therefore about the moral and intellectual content of America's approach to the problems of peacemaking at the end of World War II. President Roosevelt had been a minor official in Woodrow Wilson's administration and had run for Vice President in 1920 under the Wilson banner. He was a convinced Wilsonian, as was Truman. Both Roosevelt and Truman were sustained in 1945 by the general American conviction that the nation had made a great mistake in not following Wilson's advice in 1919. It was almost universally believed in America that if the United States had been an active member of the League, fully supporting policies of collective security against aggression, the aggressive impulse would have been snuffed out in Manchuria or Abyssinia or Spain or the Rhineland, and World War II would never have taken place.

The first Roosevelt-Churchill public declaration shortly after Pearl Harbor was a pledge to create a new and better League of Nations after the war. And a team in the State Department worked on plans for the United Nations organization throughout the war, meeting often with British and other Allied officials to discuss the problems.

Wilson's view of world politics is often quite wrongly characterized as naive idealism, and contrasted with that of more worldly practitioners of *Realpolitik*. Like most statesmen, Wilson made some major mistakes, but a failure to understand the role of power in world politics was not one of them. Wilson, Roosevelt, and Truman knew with every fiber of their being that their goal of an open system of independent states functioning in accordance with international law was possible only in a world order firmly based on a balance of power, and on the accepted habit of cooperation among the great powers. Hence the Charter of the United Nations posits a state system designed to recreate and even strengthen the role for the permanent members of the Security Council that the European great powers had played during the 19th century.

IN DESIGNING the peace settlements, therefore, the first question the United States had to confront was the possibility of continued cooperation with the Soviet Union. The American interest in bringing Germany and Japan as democracies into close and permanent association with the United States, Great Britain, and France was taken as axiomatic. Despite the passions of the war, that principle invariably prevailed over contrary proposals in all discussions of postwar policy both before and immediately after the spring of 1945. It was generally assumed that such relations with Germany and Japan were possible and could be achieved by wise and far-sighted American and Allied policy. The Soviet Union, it was clear, was another matter.

During the war, Soviet-Allied relations were characterized by episodes of nearly unbelievable Soviet hostility, and in the early postwar period the Soviet leaders brusquely rejected the Marshall Plan and the Baruch Plan, which offered them reconstruction loans and nuclear cooperation; they took over Eastern Europe, repudiating their promise to hold free elections in that sensitive area; and they refused to discuss or modify their policy of indefinite expansion both in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Facing these bleak realities, the West decided to pursue the course of deterring and containing Soviet expansion, and defeating it when necessary, rather than eliminating the Soviet Union's capacity to commit aggression in a fundamental way.

We have lived with that decision, for better or for worse, since the end of the 40's. The policy embodied in the concept of containment is now eroding under the pressure of events, and the West faces new decisions and new opportunities com-

* F. R. Bridge and Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System, 1815-1914* (Longman, 1980), p. 2.

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parable in magnitude to those of the creative age of Truman and Acheson.

WHAT must be said first about the containment decision in the 40's, I am convinced, is that it was inevitable for reasons which reflect the finest features of the American national character and of Western culture at large. It was unthinkable for the United States, Great Britain, and France to wage a preventive war against an ally as soon as the common enemy surrendered.

Roosevelt is often portrayed as Stalin's dupe in accepting the Teheran and Yalta agreements which have determined the structure of world politics ever since. The conventional wisdom is that Churchill knew better but could not act without Roosevelt. Churchill was of course a far deeper man than Roosevelt, and far better schooled in world affairs. He had borne higher responsibilities during World War I, and had had a more sustained involvement in international politics during the interwar years. But neither the United States government nor the British government harbored any illusions about the nature and purposes of Soviet policy during and after World War II. Both in the conduct of the war and in the preparation and then the execution of postwar plans, the Soviet Union made its intentions manifest. The governments of the United States, Great Britain, and France understood what was happening; there was great foreboding within them and a correspondingly intense determination to make every possible effort to continue and improve the wartime pattern of Soviet-Allied cooperation as a necessary or at least a most desirable part of the foundation for a civilized and workable system of general peace.

At the end of the war, Bertrand Russell proposed a Western ultimatum to the Soviet Union, backed by the American monopoly of nuclear weapons—an ultimatum calling on the Soviet Union to cooperate in the creation of a peaceful and stable state system or face the consequences. Russell was almost alone in supporting such views. The West preferred the policy of George Kennan's classic 1947 article: contain Soviet expansion and give the benign influence of Russian culture time. The leaders of the West were confident that sooner or later the civilizing influence of Russian high culture would come to dominate Soviet policy, if only Western policy were suitably patient, sympathetic, firm, and persuasive. In any event, for reasons rooted in its own culture, the West could not seriously consider more drastic measures until it was convinced beyond peradventure of doubt that there was no chance of inducing the Soviet Union to give up its drive for empire.

Thus in 1947 the West launched the policy of containment, the foundation for an ambitious foreign policy of economic and social progress, of political solidarity, and of international cooperation in the control of nuclear weapons and technology. The Marshall Plan, Bretton Woods, UNRRA, the Baruch Plan, the Point-Four program, NATO, and the Truman Doctrine were its best-known public symbols, but its policies resulted in a far-reaching network of institutions and programs. For two decades, Western foreign policy was moderately successful, except in the area of achieving effective control of nuclear weapons and nuclear technology. It was the engine of reconstruction and economic growth in the capitalist world, the Third World, and indeed the world of Communist states, and it sustained an impressive cultural and political renaissance in many parts of the world.

But from the beginning Western foreign policy failed in its most fundamental goal—the restoration of the state system as an effective check on aggression and an effective instrument of peaceful change. The West hesitated before the challenge of enforcing the rules of the United Nations Charter against aggression in Eastern Europe. With some success, it moved to defeat Soviet-supported aggression in the Third World, only to discover that successful instances of Western defense—in Berlin and Korea, for example—did not deter further aggression, but simply led to an increase in the scale of violence the next time. The Soviet Union did not mellow in the sunshine of Russian high culture, as George Kennan had anticipated. On the contrary, its program of expansion and aggression became steadily worse, and its armed forces and its accumulation of arms continued to grow at a stupefying rate.

WESTERN opinion has been extremely reluctant to accept the reality of Soviet imperialism as a fact of life. Perhaps André Siegfried's comment is a clue to the phenomenon. The French political scientist said that the great deception of Western opinion about Communism was accomplished by the French Chamber of Deputies when its first Communist members were elected, and asked to be seated at the extreme Left. "They had no claim to sit at the extreme Left," he said. "They belong among the most rigid reactionaries on the extreme Right. But by seating them on the Left, the Chamber conferred on the Communist movement the prestige of the Mountain in the French Revolutionary Assembly, the dominant legend and myth of Western political culture." Whether or not the prestige of being on the Left in Western politics explains Western unwillingness to take the Soviet Union for what it is, the tension between the Soviet Union and the rest of the world is a problem with which humanity has been struggling ever since the Bolshevik revolution. The god of Communism has failed many times, but large parts of Western opinion still hesitate to believe it, troubled by passionate loyalties, poignant memories, and noble dreams.

However difficult it is for Western opinion to believe that the Soviet Union is an imperialist

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power of overweening ambition, the lessons which Western policy should draw from the experience of the last forty years are clear if civilization is to have a chance to survive. The postwar era is over. We must liberate ourselves from the shackles of the Kennan theory we have been following since 1947—that a little patience, a little containment, Western economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, and the influence of classical Russian culture will tame the leaders of the Soviet Union, induce them to give up their dream of empire, and lead them to live like other states within their legitimate boundaries in accordance with the rules of the United Nations Charter, and especially its rule against aggression. The leaders of the Soviet Union are serious people, not children to be cajoled into doing what is good for them. We should respect them for what they are, and finally recognize that they really mean what they say and do. The policy of containment based on Kennan's romantic and condescending hypothesis, which has been the cornerstone of Western policy throughout this period, should be supplemented now by new policies designed to deal more directly and effectively with the Soviet drive for power in the nuclear environment.

To reach that conclusion is in no sense to qualify the judgment with which I started this comment—that the United States dealt with the problems of the peace after 1945 fully as well as it did with the problems of war before 1945. It is no reproach to a policy to conclude that after forty years of trial and error it needs modification, improvement, and renewal. The United States has been seeking to defend its interests in world politics since 1945 in the grand manner, and on a grand scale. It has done so pretty well—not brilliantly, but pretty well, all things considered, and above all well enough to have avoided irreversible damage. Western Europe and Japan are firmly within the Western camp, and China's Western orientation will continue as long as the Chinese think we will win. There is no reason to suppose that if the United States does as well in the next forty years we need fear the outcome.

ELLIOT COHEN's second question—about controlling the ultimate threat of the nuclear weapon—deals with an aspect of the broader problem of a just world order discussed in my response to his first question. The Soviet rejection of the Baruch Plan was one of the bitter turning points of the cold war. Dean Acheson and David Lilienthal were primarily responsible for the ideas embodied in the Baruch Plan, and it was in retrospect an extraordinarily bold and far-reaching offer. It would have required a Soviet decision to participate in the open states system envisioned by the United Nations Charter as a responsible member and not as its sworn enemy. But, as Stalin told Averell Harriman near the end of the war, "We have decided to go our own way."

Soviet nuclear policy is an integral part of the struggle for dominance which is the essence of Soviet foreign policy. For the United States, the Western powers, and, it is to be hoped, China as well, the goal of foreign policy is a pluralist system of peace based on general respect for international law; the Soviet Union is engaged in a program of indefinite expansion fueled by the aggressive use of force both by the Soviet Union itself and by its proxies, agents, and surrogates. Its goal is hegemony. The United States and its allies look to their nuclear arsenals as an aspect of self-defense and a deterrent against aggression, and to arms-control agreements as an assurance of their capacity to sustain deterrence, predictability, and stability in a changing military environment. For the Soviets, on the other hand, the goal of their nuclear policy is to achieve a plausible first-strike capacity. They are convinced that they could use such an arsenal without firing a nuclear weapon as the ultimate tool of aggression—as an intimidating sanction preventing any American conventional force or nuclear response to Soviet aggression against other states: that is, as a device to dissolve the American alliances in the Atlantic and the Pacific, and force the United States into impotence and isolation in a world without hope. The goal of Soviet diplomacy in arms-control negotiations, therefore, is to make it possible for the Soviet Union to achieve, enhance, and consolidate a plausible first-strike capacity, and to deny the United States a deterrent capability based on a credible threat of retaliation. The Soviet leaders conduct their campaign of expansion with some prudence, so as not to arouse us too abruptly. But their psychology is that of men at war.

CLEARLY, one must answer Elliot Cohen's second question, "Not yet." We and the other nations—primarily the Soviet Union—have not yet met and mastered what he properly called the "ultimate challenge" of the nuclear weapon. The United States has tried ever since the days of the Baruch Plan offer to put the genie back in the bottle. The Soviet Union is marching to a different drummer. Nuclear blackmail is much more attractive to the Soviet Union than nuclear war. The Soviet Union is pursuing its goal of expansion by political means, and doing so very well. There is no reason for it to consider the risky and uncertain alternative of nuclear war.

Thus the risk of nuclear war is not great, so far as the major industrial powers are concerned. One can never be confident that an irrational political leader or a terrorist band will not obtain and detonate a nuclear weapon. But the "ultimate challenge" of the nuclear weapon—the challenge, that is, of destroying human life and bringing on nuclear winter—is not high on the list of the dangers facing civilization. To preserve the present precarious equilibrium, the United States will be obliged to maintain a strong retaliatory deterrent

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so long as the Soviet Union remains committed to its policies of expansion. But that is not a task beyond the reach of American politics.

If we look at Elliot Cohen's third question in the light of these comments on his first two, it becomes apparent, I submit, that more is at stake in the task of fulfilling the aspirations of the United Nations Charter than the balance of power and the territorial integrity and political independence of the Western nations and China. If we allow the Soviet Union to achieve a *Pax Sovietica* by conquest, by nuclear blackmail, or by a combination of the two, Hitler and Stalin will have triumphed from their graves, and the examples of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln will fade from the memory of mankind. Social life everywhere would be dominated by the cynicism and sadism of the police state at best, and by the model of the Gulag Archipelago at worst. A saving remnant would no doubt survive, as it has survived in the Soviet Union, keeping the candles lit in cellars and caves, and circulating *samizdat*.

But there can be no real hope of repressing and controlling the aggressive instinct—no real hope, that is, of a future for civilization—unless the alliances led by the United States insist on genuine peace. Together, they have more than enough power and potential power to accomplish the task. It remains to be seen whether they can marshal enough imagination and intelligence to act while it is still possible to do so by the methods of diplomacy, discussion, and peace.

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Bayard Rustin: Elliot Cohen's description of the end of World War II as the prelude to "the glorious era of peace which we have awaited so long" reflects the buoyant optimism that seduced so many Americans in 1945. Such optimism, though looking somewhat naive in retrospect, was understandable. Its innocence was even appealing. Pessimism, even if generated by a sober understanding of the Soviet Union and a healthy skepticism about human nature, was out of place. After all, there was much to celebrate. The Nazi regime and its Asian counterpart, the Japanese military machine, had efficiently and brilliantly transformed the technology of the day into a seemingly invincible engine of conquest. But the Germans and Japanese were derailed and finally crushed by the most eclectic and unlikely alliance ever assembled in human history. For a time, class antagonisms, racial tensions, religious disputes, narrow national interests, and even long-standing and deep ideological conflicts were put on the shelf—though, as we soon discovered, by no means resolved or forgotten. This era of good feeling and justifiable pride in a job well done gave rise to mass euphoria, the conviction that no problem, no matter how complex, was beyond a sensible solution. The evidence was persuasive: a patchwork alliance of brains, brawn, and steel had defeated Hitler. Now that same alliance, that same human grit and ingenuity, could be turned to other problems, such as war, poverty, and disease.

I remember so well the hopes and dreams of people like Norman Thomas and the many intelligent people who helped him launch the Postwar World Council, a group that sought to transform "planning for war" into "planning for peace." I also recall my friends in the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the League for Industrial Democracy, and other associations that grouped themselves into what we called the democratic Left. In all those places, one saw enthusiastic hope. This optimism was not limited to the United States. Throughout the Western world and within the regions under its influence, popular movements such as trade unions, cooperatives, social-democratic parties, and anti-colonialist and anti-racist groups flourished and expanded. In some countries they assumed power. In others, they won acceptance as permanent and influential institutions with a legitimate claim to important roles in modern industrial societies.

All these advances were enormously important; they have had a lasting and decisive effect. But, in all candor, the world we sought then is not the world we live in today. Of course, significant advances have been made. Colonialism of the old sort is gone forever. We have succeeded, despite great odds, in preventing a third European war. Parts of Asia and some few enclaves in Africa, like Botswana and Senegal, have become free, democratic, and economically prosperous, at least relative to their position of forty years back. In the United States, the legal foundation of racism, though perhaps not the economic one, has been obliterated. People from the working classes in the United States and other Western countries have won new political and social rights. And organizations like the European Economic Community, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and an array of other regional and specialized international groups have fostered fruitful cooperation. But despite these gains it would be wrong, I believe, to assert that the "giant's strength, in production, in cooperation, in planning, in courage" has been "mustered as greatly and as wisely for the arts of peaceful living."

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Again, to be frank, I am not the least bit surprised that the answer is a negative one.

Looking back forty years, I think our optimistic expectations, though understandable and well-intentioned, were never really all that plausible. I say this for several reasons, none of which is original with me. First, the objective of the military alliance against Hitler and Japan was unlike any social objective we could ever have had. For the United States and its allies, the objective was simple, clear, and beyond dispute. Everyone wanted one thing and one thing only: the defeat of Germany and Japan. This is a considerably more narrow objective than world peace and prosperity. Second, the debates about the means for achieving this objective were, by and large, discussions about technique and only rarely about principle. A Stalinist, a social democrat, a free-market liberal could find little to argue about when discussing the proper way to invade the beaches of Normandy, the best method for maintaining supply lines, or the most effective way to conduct an air strike against the factories of Düsseldorf. Third, everyone involved in the drive against Nazi Germany and Japan had a common interest in the outcome. No one would be worse off in any way after those despotic regimes had fallen. In short, the objective of the war effort was clear, the common interest was manifest, and the debate about proper means was confined to technical questions.

But when it came to promoting peace, prosperity, justice, and international cooperation, none of those advantages was present. There was no clear common interest. The debate about methods necessarily touched upon ideological and philosophical questions, not just technical ones. And, in the end, there really was no agreement on the meaning of the objective. Peace and prosperity are always ambiguous terms, especially when one of the parties to the discussion is the Soviet Union.

More than anything else, the growing chasm between the United States and the Soviet Union dashed the hopes we have had for ushering in "the glorious era of peace which we have awaited so long." The divisions between the two great powers, the only such left after the war, continue today, in many respects in a much worsened way. These divisions are aggravated and made all the more complex by the seemingly irreversible totalitarian character of the Soviet Union.

ELLIOT COHEN rightly identified the atomic bomb as the "ultimate challenge." But the whole question of the nuclear arms race and the possibility of moving toward disarmament is, in the end, inseparably intertwined with the totalitarian nature of the Soviet Union. Our success or failure in limiting the danger of a nuclear war, a danger that is real, depends ultimately on our efforts to cope with the challenge of totalitarianism. Thus, I will pass over the question about nuclear weapons and move on to the question about totalitarianism.

How successful have we been in dealing with totalitarianism? I hesitate to give a pat answer. If we think only of ourselves and our West European friends, we might justifiably respond, "Fairly well." Not a single inch of European soil has been yielded to the Soviets since the Iron Curtain was frozen in place after the war. Considering the military strength of the Soviets and the political instability of some European nations, such an achievement is no small wonder. By and large, NATO has been a success. Yet if we look beyond our own shores the picture is much different. Many old colonial regimes have been supplanted by totalitarian ones, either cheap imitations of the Soviet system or home-grown varieties of despotism. Examples are all too plentiful: Angola, Mozambique, the nightmarish regime of Idi Amin, the miserable rulers of Ethiopia, Khomeini's Iran, Qaddafi's Libya, and now, closer to home, the Sandinistas who have taken up residence in Nicaragua. One must also recall the occupied lands of Kampuchea, Laos, and South Vietnam, all of them swallowed up whole by the Sovietized regime in Hanoi.

In most cases, these totalitarian regimes have been installed and sustained by the force of arms, almost always Soviet ones. And today they are largely, and in many cases exclusively, subsidized by the Soviet Union. But the military advances of totalitarianism are just a piece of the overall scene. Of equal importance, I submit, are the ideological advances, namely, the widespread confusion and mistakes about the true nature of totalitarianism as a political phenomenon.

There are certain parallels here with regard to the rise of Nazism. Hitler and his movement were allowed to flourish and expand because the democracies never quite came to terms with the nature of the beast before them. For years, national leaders and opinion-makers across the entire political spectrum tended to dismiss Nazism as "just another" political movement, perhaps a bit more zealous and bizarre than others, but, no doubt, unexceptional. Nothing new ever appears under the sun, so they thought. To be sure, some had the audacity and insight to recognize the uniquely diabolical quality inherent in Nazism, but for the most part it was not understood for what it was. To do so would have been too inconvenient and too much of a jolt to the status quo. Today, totalitarianism is still not properly understood, either on the Right or Left. The evidence for this is abundant.

TAKE conservatives. While many rightists, American and European, instinctively oppose the Soviet Union and other totalitarian regimes, their opposition is almost always superficial, pragmatic, and, in the end, usually not much more than jingoistic flag-waving. When economic interests

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enter the picture or considerations of international *Realpolitik* come to the fore, conservatives temper their criticism. Recall how quickly the Reagan administration lifted the grain embargo against the Soviet Union, perhaps the only truly effective and bothersome sanction used against it. And, lest we forget, it was a Republican President, Gerald Ford, who, at the urging of Henry Kissinger, slammed the White House door in the face of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, perhaps the most potent and persuasive enemy of totalitarianism alive today.

Or think of our peculiar attitude toward the People's Republic of China, a regime that was just as totalitarian as the Soviet Union when we opened relations with it. More than once, conservatives and business leaders have whitewashed and even glamorized the Chinese government, hailing its disciplined work force and promoting it as a great market for American goods. This benign attitude toward the Chinese, who have gone to great lengths to suppress just about every human right imaginable, certainly sends ambiguous signals to those who look for principles and consistency in American opposition to totalitarianism. Much as the muting of criticism of the Soviet Union during World War II gave Stalin a blank check to carry out his internal atrocities, so too the self-censoring of all but the most limp criticism of the Chinese does the same. What is worse, it gives a credible foundation to the charge that our opposition to totalitarianism is really just a mask for being anti-Soviet. Those who make the charge assert that our foreign policy is not motivated by principles but by economic self-interest or by old-fashioned nationalism. The reaction of conservatives to the Solidarity movement in Poland is also full of inconsistencies, not only in their negative attitude toward the trade-union aspect of Solidarity, but also in their squeamishness about cutting off bank credit to the Polish government.

Part of the conservative problem resides in the fact that not many on the Right have ever developed a coherent, cogent, and systematic critique of totalitarianism. When one examines the best and most insightful studies and reflections on the problem of totalitarianism, one immediately thinks of George Orwell, Arthur Koestler, Hannah Arendt, Leszek Kolakowski, Milovan Djilas, Sidney Hook, and others who emerged from within socialist and social-democratic environs. In our own polity, no one understood Soviet Communism better than George Meany and Henry Jackson, neither of them men of the Right. The Right, so much under the narrow intellectual influence of classical economic liberalism, never had the proper equipment to build a critique of totalitarianism. Without understanding it, the forces of the Right are hardly in the position to do much about it.

On the Left, one meets a different kind of confusion. First, the old gullibility, so often the trademark of far too many liberals and progressives, still survives. Most recently, we have witnessed a parade of pilgrims to Nicaragua, a country ruled by an increasingly well-entrenched minority, the Sandinistas. Many on the Left still give the benefit of the doubt to the popular totalitarian movements that rule Angola, Mozambique, and seek exclusive control of El Salvador. But there is more than gullibility here: many on the Left are unfortunately mesmerized by the peculiar belief that no Third World regime can possibly do evil. Consequently, they find it impossible to speak out against totalitarian movements such as the one that rules famine-stricken Ethiopia. It is utterly amazing that little or nothing is said about the oppression and appalling elitism of the Ethiopian government. Indeed, one might think that Ethiopia had no government whatsoever, or that perhaps the West, and not Ethiopia's Soviet sponsors, is the ultimate culprit responsible for the famine.

More important, however, is the drift toward neutralism by the more moderate and responsible elements of international social democracy, especially among the British, Germans, and Northern Europeans. To some extent this is offset by the growing skepticism of the French and Italian socialists about their former friends in the "Eurocommunist" parties. François Mitterrand and Bettino Craxi have much clearer views on Soviet intentions. But for the most part, the principled and firmly-established anti-totalitarian position of the social-democratic camp has been seriously diluted. Again, the evidence is easy to find: the recent positions adopted by social-democratic parties regarding European security issues, the frequency of exchanges and meetings with Eastern bloc "trade unionists," and the general attitude that regards the United States and the Soviet Union as threats that are, more or less, equally bad.

One source of this softening of attitudes toward totalitarianism, specifically regarding the Soviets, is the fact that the Soviet regime, once a shining model of "paradise," at least for those enthusiasts who chose to see it that way, is now rather tattered and gray. European neutralism is in fact boosted by the dullness of the Soviet behemoth precisely because it has wrapped itself in a shroud of banality, something that succeeded amazingly well in protecting Nazism. Many now view the Soviet Union as a massive, paranoid bureaucracy, no more dangerous than the United States postal service armed with nuclear weapons. If such an image persists, totalitarianism will have scored an irreversible victory, having effectively removed the ultimate basis for opposing it, namely its unique and, in almost every case, indestructible monopoly of the entire political, economic, social, and cultural life of a nation.

Opposed to this feigned banality of totalitarian-

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ism is the depressing banality of American political debate. To a shocking degree, concern about political principles, human rights, genuine justice, and movement toward social cooperation and solidarity has declined markedly. Witness the last campaign for the Presidency, most especially the attitudes, interests, and rhetoric of the "new generation," most of whom cast their ballots for President Reagan and Senator Hart. If the totalitarian menace is to be engaged intellectually or politically by that kind of narcissistic and ideologically vacuous politics, then we are in serious trouble.

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Edward Shils: Elliot Cohen was undoubtedly a wise and good man and the problems which he perceived in 1945 have continued to be the fundamental tasks through the ensuing forty years. In reflecting on the adequacy of the way in which these tasks have been dealt with by American society, I will discuss primarily the role of American intellectuals.

Elliot Cohen raised no questions about the civility of American intellectuals; it was reasonable for him not to raise such a question. World War II had ended victoriously, the currents of intellectual opinion seemed to be running jerkily but more or less parallel with the obligations of civility. To the extent that this was so, it did not last very long. The attrition of fellow-traveling with its anti-American attitudes at the end of the 1940's and the beginning of the 1950's was only apparent; the reality was hidden and actually reinforced by the obfuscation, mendacity, and hyperbole of Senator Joseph McCarthy and his own fellow-travelers. It was possible to mistake the silence of that period for a continuation of the patriotism of the period of the war.

The silence was deceptive. What was hiding under the silence was a sullen dissatisfaction with the United States in its domestic arrangements and policies and its activities in the international arena. It took only the startling events of 1956 and the demise of McCarthy to call into the open a new brand of radicalism among intellectuals in the United States and in Western Europe. The conditions of the 1960's were very propitious for its efflorescence. The student demonstrations and occupations of university buildings, the riots, looting, and burnings in the black districts, and the inefficacy of military operations in South Vietnam all encouraged intellectuals of ostensibly mature years to launch themselves on the course of an unprecedentedly vehement and widespread antagonism to American society and the government of the United States.

The Communist party of the United States had dwindled, but the spirit of fellow-traveling lived on, from time to time critical of the Soviet Union but unceasingly against the United States; the former always got the benefit of the doubt—the latter never. Far beyond the boundaries of the Students for a Democratic Society, a pervasive antipathy toward American society, and toward the capitalistic economy and private property, came noisily to the surface. It flourished not only among literary men and women, in whom an aesthetic repugnance for bourgeois society had always been quite strong, but also among academics and journalists, in whom it had been present previously *but not as a rule and never so acrimoniously.*

It has scarcely varied since that time. There was some alleviation during the Kennedy administration but it was slight and quite brief. The coming of the Johnson administration was an aggravation. The election of Richard Nixon gave a new impetus to it. The shock of Republican victory, the victory of the man who had done down Alger Hiss, accentuated the grievances. Watergate was a small gift which the intellectuals developed into a cornucopia of evidence of corruption. The resurgence of traditional patriotism in the working and lower-middle classes shriveled as a result of disappointment in the Nixon administration and President Nixon's own enforced and humiliating resignation. The electoral victory of Ronald Reagan added contempt to the animosity of the intellectuals.

The growth of "neoconservatism" among a minority of intellectuals—which was really a reassertion of traditional liberalism—does indeed represent a variation from the predominant collectivistic emancipationist liberalism. But the only effect of neoconservatism on the proponents of the prevailing view has been to intensify their rancor against domestic and foreign policies which do not take for granted the moral superiority of "the social ownership of the instruments of production."

EARLY in the 1950's, C. Wright Mills wrote of the American intellectuals as the "powerless class." Nothing could have been more erroneous. Since the 1930's, this "class" has come increasingly to influence the substance of public opinon and it has, in doing so, influenced public policies in many different fields. It has led government policies in a collectivistic direction—although it has not been alone in doing so.

In important respects, American society and government have moved in this past half-century along lines long recommended by intellectuals. The establishment of the "merit system" in the federal civil service, the increased powers of the federal government vis-à-vis state and local governments, the increased intervention of the federal

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government in the economic life of the country, the provision of welfare services, and the more active role of the judiciary as "an agent of social change"—all these had been on the agenda of American liberal and radical intellectuals since the turn of the century. Yet it cannot be said that the successful realization of this agenda has reconciled the intellectuals to American society. The policies for which they agitated so long have left them disappointed. In their view nothing that has been done has been enough. They are as discontented—more discontented—with the society which they and their forerunners have created than those forerunners were with the pattern of society which existed between 1880 and 1930. In the succeeding half-century, American society moved steadily, with few reversals, toward a regime which assumes governmental omnicompetence, omniscience, and omniprovidence. This is what many intellectuals have desired but it is still not enough for them.

Now let me turn to the first task which Elliot Cohen assigned to American society: "the arts of peaceful living."

In many respects, the United States is now a much better society than it was a half-century ago. The improvement in the condition of the black members of American society has been vast. Anti-Semitism has practically disappeared. The material standard of living of the entire population is much higher than it used to be. Freedom of expression and freedom in conduct have been extended far beyond what was thought conceivable a half-century ago. Educational opportunity has been as greatly extended as its most fervent proponents argued for. These improvements have been made possible by the American business enterprise and by fundamental changes in opinion. The progressive intellectual could reasonably claim credit for some of the latter.

At the same time, American society has become disordered by its very advances. Desires and aspirations, demands and expectations, have been raised to the point where the institutions can scarcely gratify them. The exacerbation of demands and expectations has set the society topsy-turvy in consequence of the unrealizable demands which intellectuals have made the norm. American society has become more restless and discontented, its grievances more plaintive and pronounced. It is more bitterly contentious and litigious than it used to be. It regards governmental action as the best means of assuaging its grievances, but whatever is done to assuage them, the grievances give rise to more demanding demands.

The "arts of peaceful living" have not been well-mastered by American society. The United States seems to me to be a less happy society now than it has been for a long time, more embittered and resentful. Individuals are more resistant to the obligations they have undertaken, more harsh and sullen in their attitudes, more confidently self-righteous, more cranky than they were.

The intellectuals of the United States are among the main instigators both of the progress and of the dissatisfaction. They are reluctant to acknowledge either the progress or the disorder. Progressivistic intellectuals have often criticized bourgeois society for its blind adherence to tradition. The compliment should be returned to them. No one is more bound by traditional beliefs than the intellectuals in their traditional antinomianism.

How has the United States fared in meeting the "ultimate challenge" of nuclear weapons? As these weapons have never been used since 1945, the answer must be positive. Yet the answer can never be definitive since there always exists the possibility that they will be used in the future. Nevertheless, thus far we have managed remarkably well. There has been no war in Europe or between the United States and a European power for forty years. That is twice as long as the peace between World Wars I and II; it is just short of the number of years between the Franco-Prussian war and World War I, *quand la vie était belle et douce*. That is quite remarkably satisfactory as an achievement. It is an achievement of the policy of the "balance of terror."

Détente would have been a good thing had it been bilateral. Total disarmament might be a good thing, but it is utterly unrealistic to seek that as an objective. Total nuclear disarmament is not a realistic possibility and it probably would not be a good thing—I say this as one who once favored it. If it were not for the balance of terror which is sustained by nuclear weapons, war in Europe would have been more likely, given the immense numerical superiority in manpower and equipment of the Soviet Union and its allies of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet conception of the world and of its adversaries—as everyone who is not under its control is thought to be.

Yet the United States government has been under continuous censure from American progressivistic intellectuals who dominate public discussion—for its failure to take the initiative for the ultimate prohibition of the use and then for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Most of these critics do not know or do not remember that the United States government made just such a proposal just after World War II and that its initiative was frustrated. It was the Soviet Union which refused to discuss the proposal seriously because it did not wish to allow inspection of its compliance with the terms of the proposed arrangement.

American intellectuals—again not all of them, but those who have given their names to the support of SANE, the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Federation of American Scientists, the Council for a Livable World, and the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*—are incessantly haranguing the govern-

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ment of the United States about "arms control." Many of the scientists and some of the laymen who are doing so are men of good will, but I think that they are barking up the wrong tree. Their arguments are really irrelevant and perhaps even damaging to the cause of peace. Unless they are in favor of complete disarmament, conventional as well as nuclear, which even they are too realistic to demand, the world being what it is, many of them are lacking in good faith. Their arguments are often well-informed on details; they are masters of intricate argument, but they are fundamentally blind to the nature and motives of the elite of the Soviet Union. They argue with the government of the United States; they do not argue with the government of the Soviet Union. They make declarations in public on behalf of Andrei Sakharov and Anatoly Shcharansky and other Soviet critics of the Soviet Union, and they are usually acting in good faith when they do so, but this does not extend to the rest of their arguments.

The burden is always put upon the United States; the United States is always the party guilty of hindering and hamstringing negotiations, of irrationally distrusting the Soviet Union, of not taking the seriousness of the Soviets earnestly enough. It is invariably the United States, according to their views, which has taken the initiative in the "arms race"; it is always the United States which overstates the military power of the Soviet Union. So it goes on, in great variety and sometimes with great ingenuity, but with one determining feature—namely, the greater responsibility of the United States for endangering the safety of mankind through its unreasonableness. The American critics of the United States government—like the Soviet Union, its satellites, and its West European followers—have declared themselves on the side of peace. They clearly take it for granted that those who do not share their view must be in favor of war.

There is a deep underlying prejudice in this view: namely, that a bourgeois, capitalistic society is morally pernicious and that a society in which there is "social ownership of the instruments of production" is inevitably right. The Soviet Union is the beneficiary of this prejudice.

INTELLECTUALS discontented with their own societies had, ever since 1917, found a home for their wounded spirits in the Soviet Union. There were severe critics of the Soviet Union for its cruelty and mendacity, but their accusations could often be discredited by reference to their allegedly base motives or they could be set aside by referring to the extraordinary difficulties faced by the Soviet Union in getting itself under way. Since that time, the admirers of the Soviet Union have been disabused of many of their illusions. Nevertheless, the attachment to the Soviet Union was too firmly implanted to be dissolved by experience. Even though they disavowed the Soviet Union on particular points, especially regarding infringements of public liberty, and even though they ceased to invoke its example as a society with a superior economy and fundamental equality, their attachment to it was not broken. In any comparisons between the Soviet Union on the one hand and Western societies and the United States on the other, in any conflicts of policy between the Soviet Union and the United States, it was always the United States which was in the wrong—explicitly—while the Soviet Union was always in the right—implicitly. The latter-day fellow-travelers are no longer fellow-travelers of the Communist party of the United States—although retrospectively that party of deceivers and wire-pullers is now being vindicated by some academic scholars as a party of courageous and humanitarian democrats and liberals! The greatest progress of the latter-day fellow-travelers toward liberation from the dogmatic tradition of the "social ownership of the instruments of production" is that they no longer praise the Soviet Union except implicitly and by comparison with the United States.

Fellow-traveling in the style of the 1930's and 1940's has practically disappeared in the United States. It is not death or greater sophistication or adroitness or a gradual dawning of honesty or civility which has abolished the older style of fellow-traveling. There is a new type of nonsectarian radicalism which affords itself the moral luxury and tactical benefit of criticizing the Soviet Union while affirming the Soviet Union's ultimate rectitude. It has, after all, realized the "social ownership of the instruments of production." Other rhetorical devices are used to affirm the virtues of the Soviet Union: by pointing for every Soviet vice to a parallel American vice, the vices of the Soviet Union are transfigured. Sheer denial and greedy obliteration from memory of actions by the Soviet Union and constant attention to American ineptitudes and iniquities are part of the repertoire of the American intellectual critics of the United States. The campaign against the Central Intelligence Agency seldom refers to the necessity of offsetting Soviet epionage and discovering Soviet actions bearing on American security. The extreme secretiveness of the Soviet Union is practically never censured; the secrecy of the operations of the Central Intelligence Agency is an unending object of indignation. The term "cold warrior" is a term of opprobrium; its invocation implies that it is only American mischief-makers who prevent the abatement of conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States. To be an "anti-Communist" is still thought to be a very bad thing; to be an anti-capitalist is taken for granted among *bien pensant* intellectuals. Quickness in coming to the justification of the Soviet Union is thought to be an obligation of the protectors of détente, peace, and the future of mankind which they have arrogated to their exclusive custody. And so it goes.

Despite this broad consensus of progressivistic

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intellectuals in universities, television, the superior stratum of daily journalism, and the ragtag and bobtail of the journalism of "life-style" and modishness, American society has resisted totalitarianism. At home it has not been a threat; abroad the United States has repeatedly resisted, although not always successfully after the capitulations of Yalta, the expansion of Soviet power. The United States has done so despite the increased prominence of the intellectual spokesmen for what they call "peace" but what is in fact the realization of the aims of Soviet foreign policy by peaceful means. It has done so despite the increased influence of this point of view—and other parts of the program of the progressivistic intellectuals as well—among politicians, especially in and around the federal legislature.

From reading the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post,* liberal magazines like the *Nation,* the *New Yorker* and its various local provincial imitators, *Esquire,* etc., one might indeed conclude that, fortunately, the intellectuals are as "powerless" as C. Wright Mills once said. The fact is that the intellectuals are far from powerless, and yet they have not prevented American governments and the American people from doing as decent a job as they have on the second and third of the tasks set for them by Elliot Cohen.

For despite the paucity of accurate and comprehensive information, the large public, though ill-served by the press, has a more realistic grasp of what we face in dealing with the Soviet Union than the better educated, the concerned scientists, the progressivistic legislators and academic social scientists, the professors of divinity, the pediatricians, the beauties of film and stage. The ordinary mass of middle- and working-class men and women of this country are suspicious of the Soviet Union, they dislike the society it enforces, and they suspect its intentions abroad. How and why do they maintain as much steadfastness in their patriotism as they do? For one thing, they are not educated or cultivated enough to believe in the fictions of the progressivistic intellectuals.

We have been saved by the patriotism and common sense of many ordinary citizens, by the patriotism and common sense of just about enough Congressmen to support the defense budget, and by the devotion and ingenuity of many scientists and engineers who do not regard it as a derogation from their obligations to serve their country's well-being.

NOT all is well with the United States. There is much disorder in our social life. Yet despite these disorders we have survived and in some respects even improved. We have avoided war with the Soviet Union and we have not capitulated to it. We have not solved the "ultimate challenge" of nuclear weapons but we have not been paralyzed by it either and we have, lamely and not always effectively, stood up to the threat of totalitarianism. For all these blessings, little thanks to our most prominent intellectuals inside the universities and outside them as well!

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John R. Silber: Looking at Elliot Cohen's introductory statement, I am struck by his anticipation of the future which is now our past. He asked exactly the right questions, and this symposium might almost be said to have been foreordained by COMMENTARY's founding editor.

To begin with his first question, we can be most sanguine about the extent to which the United States has applied its "giant's strength" to the arts of peaceful living.

Although it took nearly a generation to accomplish the task, we completed what was certainly our most pressing piece of unfinished business, disposing in constitutional and legal terms of the legacy of slavery and the Civil War. In 1945, the United States was still a thoroughly segregated society. Schooling was legally separate and shamefully unequal in the states of the Confederacy, the border South, and small portions of the border North. Moreover, schools were segregated *de facto* and seriously unequal over most of the "enlightened" areas of the East and Midwest. The armed forces were still segregated. Such institutionalized racism is now largely a part of our past, although living memory for Americans over thirty years of age. Moreover, through economic opportunity we are eroding many other vestiges of slavery; we may hope that this development will eventually outrun the social engineers who set the quotas.

In material terms, we have put the depression behind us and have achieved a prosperity unequaled in the history of mankind—a prosperity of such intensity and extension that we must now consider the relevance of Juvenal's maxim that luxury is more ruthless than war. Since 1945, the real income of Americans has tripled. And with that income, they can buy goods and services and, as well, varieties of trash and dangerous drugs that were for the most part barely conceivable when Elliot Cohen sat down to write.

We could, therefore, make a credible claim to have applied our giant's strength to the arts of peace with a skill and determination that equaled our prosecution of the war. But at the same time, we have experienced in some areas of our society a calamitous decline. The rise of families headed by teen-age mothers living in the third generation on

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welfare; a drug problem which appears to alter only in fashions for the abused substance; a widespread decline in literacy and the quality of the schools—we have certainly provided ourselves with problems that call for an Amos to denounce, a Jeremiah to lament, and a Solomon to solve.

ALTHOUGH one would hardly guess it from the current wave of doom-saying, we have come to grips with the atomic bomb in a remarkably effective fashion. Nuclear weapons, despised by all right-thinking lovers of peace, have in fact guaranteed the peace and can continue to do so. They have not guaranteed the peace that should have followed upon the war. Even before Elliot Cohen founded COMMENTARY, we had already sacrificed many of the goals for which the war was fought. We lost the peace, for reasons detailed recently in these pages by John Colville. At Yalta and Potsdam we settled for a peace that was unworthy of a democratic victor. This should hardly be surprising, for even though we were ostensibly fighting a war to end totalitarianism, we fought it in close alliance with a leading totalitarian power. At Yalta, with the final collapse of Germany a foregone conclusion, we voluntarily continued our alliance with totalitarianism into the peace that was to follow.

We collaborated with Stalin in shipping back to the execution cells and the Gulag hundreds of thousands of Russian troops who wished to escape his rule. Some had been conscripted into the German army; others had voluntarily joined the forces of General Vlasov; the rest had done nothing but get captured. None should have been returned; most died at Stalin's orders.

The *casus belli* in September 1939 had been the preservation of a free Poland. Yet the Western allies, once the Third Reich lay in ruins, readily allowed Stalin to retain the part of Poland he had seized in conjunction with the Nazis, and tolerated the establishment of a puppet state in the remainder and the additions that were carved out of Germany. The treatment of Poland foreshadowed that accorded the Baltic republics, annexed outright to the USSR, and the remainder of Central Europe, incorporated as clients of the new Soviet empire.

It did not, however, take Harry Truman long to recognize the Soviet threat, and in Europe at least, the Soviet Union has been held to the conquests it had made by 1948. There, the defective peace that did follow the war, although shadowed by four decades of cold war and by incessant and increasingly virulent hot wars in the Third World, is now the second longest European peace since Waterloo. It is about to surpass the forty-three years between Sedan and Sarajevo.

Yet had we recognized that the result of the war was to be to establish a new Thousand Year Reich ruled from the East, we might have used our short-lived nuclear monopoly to force the Soviets to withdraw back behind their borders. We had already expended immense quantities of blood and treasure to force the same result upon the Germans. But when, as the Soviets put it, the "correlation of forces" was favorable to us, we did not act.

JUST as we allowed the Soviet empire its European possessions, we have failed at keeping it out of the rest of the world. As a result of the steady erosion of the understandings reached between Khrushchev and Kennedy in 1962, the Soviets now have a forward base in Cuba, which they and the Cubans use—with signal success in Nicaragua—to export totalitarianism to the rest of Latin America, while Cuba provides troops for the Soviet foreign legion in Africa.

But these strategic losses are less serious than the development—more in intellectuals than in everyone else—of the notion that the Soviet Union is a country more or less like any other and that *mutatis mutandis* it can be dealt with as we deal with other countries. This notion has recently come to be called the doctrine of moral equivalence.

It takes a certain amount of double-think to reach this position. Since Khrushchev's exposure of the crimes of Stalin, all but the most servile party hacks have recognized that the behavior of the United States is in fact distinguishable from that of the Soviet Union. To believe in moral equivalence, therefore, it is necessary—as computer scientists put it—to massage the data. The actions of the USSR are excused as no more than prudent exercises of *Realpolitik*: Czechoslovakia is said to be "a dagger pointed at Moscow"; the historic role of Poland as a buffer state between the Russians and their German enemies is recalled and recalled again; and always and ever we are called on to remember that the Soviet Union has known many invasions and has a justified desire for capacious buffer states.

But in considering the United States, *Realpolitik* is forgotten and replaced with a simplistic moralism in foreign policy that William Jennings Bryan would have found extreme. The United States is held to have no interests that it may justly defend beyond the borders of the fifty states. The same is said for its individual citizens. Choosing among evils is treated as immoral, as if it were no more than an excuse for choosing evil. And the right of the United States to survive as the bastion of freedom is equated with the right of the Soviet Union to survive as the bastion of tyranny.

This adjustment of reality became a high art during the Vietnam war, when the perfected totalitarianism of Hanoi—totally under the domination of the USSR—was judged by standards appropriate to *The Prince* and the imperfect democracy of Saigon by standards appropriate to *The City of God*. After a sufficient massage of reality, it becomes a simple matter to find moral equivalence between U.S. aid for the Nicaraguan rebels and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

But consider what U.S.-Mexican relations would

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be like if there were in fact a moral equivalence between us and the Soviets. We would have trained a cadre of Mexican officers and through their agency procured the violent overthrow of the PRI and its replacement by a no less authoritarian government strongly devoted to capitalism and to the United States. Shortly, finding this government insufficiently servile, we would have procured a second coup in which an even more pro-capitalist, pro-American group took power. And finally, finding even this regime unsatisfactory, we would have invaded with massive force, shot its leader, and, having placed an outright puppet in power, be engaged in a brutal war in which My Lai is policy rather than aberration, and would have driven millions of its people as refugees into Guatemala.

That is how the Soviet Union behaves south of *its* border.

COMMENTARY's life has been almost exactly coterminous with that of the atomic bomb. The present celebration closely follows the fortieth anniversary of Hiroshima, which was observed with a mixture of self-flagellation and grotesque misinformation. I recently found myself being told by a student that 500,000 people were killed in Hiroshima, and at least as many at Nagasaki—a fivefold exaggeration at the minimum. This is symbolic of a dominant trend in the postwar period: toward deprecating the United States and romanticizing the Soviet Union and its surrogates.

To judge from much of the discussion of Hiroshima and Nagasaki this past August, it would have been a simple matter to invade and secure the Japanese islands, a judgment for which the desperate defense of Okinawa and Iwo Jima provides manifest refutation. One would never guess that the destruction visited on the two cities differed from the destruction of Hamburg and Dresden not in scope or intensity, but only in suddenness. That so astute and shrewd an observer as Hannah Arendt could have equated the bombing of Hiroshima with mass murder shows how easily one can, by ignoring context, fall into the error of moral equivalence.

In this year of fortieth anniversaries, the media have been emphasizing the role of the Soviet Union in defeating Germany. One might almost imagine that the Soviets took Berlin because the British and Americans had been stopped at the Rhine. There was no recognition of the fact that the Western Allies deliberately held back from taking Berlin in line with Stalin's plan to ensure his control of Central Europe and a divided Germany. Nor was there any recognition that World War II did not begin, as the Soviets would have it, on June 22, 1941, but on September 1, 1939, and that it was conducted for almost two years by Germany and the Soviet Union as full and thoroughly cooperative partners.

The police state that rules Cuba continues to be justified on the basis of dubious claims of material advancement; the argument of the Grand Inquisitor is explicitly accepted as governing. Castro's apologists fail to note that Jamaica has attained a standard of living equal to Cuba's—as well as a base for further development—without robbing its people of their human rights.

Those Americans who view the situation in Nicaragua as ambiguous do so because they have lost their orientation as supporters of freedom and democracy. They have lost an essential polarization, that between civilization and barbarism. Alfred North Whitehead, speaking of an earlier confrontation between the two forces, noted:

> To Attila and his hordes their incursion into Europe was an enjoyable episode diversifying the monotonous round of a pastoral life. But we have preserved for us hymns and ejaculations of sentinels in North Italian towns as they paced the walls amid the gathering gloom of a winter's night:—"From the fury of the Huns, Good Lord deliver us." In this instance it seems easy to discriminate; barbarism and civilization were at odds with each other, and we stand for civilization.

If we truly were devoted not merely to peace but to freedom there would be no question where we would ally ourselves. Anyone really opposed to totalitarianism would support the government of El Salvador, and the people of Nicaragua against their Sandinista oppressors.

But too many of us have become indifferent to the threat of totalitarianism. Whitehead had another pungent aphorism chillingly apposite to our situation: "The deliberate aim at Peace very easily passes into its bastard substitute, Anaesthesia."

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Robert W. Tucker: The questions put by the editors bring to mind an old vaudeville joke. One man meets another and asks: "How is your wife?" The other hesitates and responds: "Compared to what?" How our record since 1945 is judged will depend upon the standards of comparison that are employed. These standards ought to be reasonable. Surely one critical test of their reasonableness is whether they are less demanding in judging foreign policy than they are in judging domestic policy. This is so because it is in domestic affairs that we are freer to pursue ideal goals. Even for very powerful nations, foreign policy belongs far more to the realm of necessity than it does to the world of freedom.

In the prevailing American outlook, however, this traditional distinction between domestic and

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foreign affairs is frequently reversed. It is in foreign rather than in domestic affairs that imposing, and often unreasonable, standards of comparison are commonly applied. Nor is this disposition confined to a particular part of the political spectrum. Both the Left and the Right share in it. Thus with respect to the question posed here, the Left judges the American record in foreign policy wanting because we have so far failed to meet the "ultimate challenge of nuclear weapons." The Right is equally insistent that we have failed to deal successfully with the threat of Soviet totalitarianism. Compared to a world rid of the twin threats of nuclear weapons and Soviet totalitarianism, we have indeed done very badly in foreign policy. Yet we would not dream of seriously applying a comparable standard for judging our domestic record.

Given this outlook, it is not surprising that foreign policy has been the object of almost continuous debate in the postwar period. The conviction that there is considerable freedom of choice in foreign policy is productive of controversy. This is particularly the case when the principal policy pursued is generally found unattractive. Since its adoption in the late 1940's, the policy of containment has seldom been free of criticism. It has been considered by some as too aggressive and by others as too defensive and even defeatist. Containment has been attacked for being too demanding of the nation's resources, or too threatening in its impact on domestic institutions and the quality of domestic life. Most often, it has been criticized for failing to hold out the solid prospect of bringing the conflict between this nation and the Soviet Union to an early and satisfactory end.

Of the many criticisms made of containment, it is the latter that has been the most common and the most telling. At the outset, containment was defended as a strategy that promised not only a successful resolution of the contest with Moscow but a successful resolution within a determinate period of years. The pessimists were those who saw the conflict persisting through the end of the following decade (the 1950's). Even George Kennan, never known for his optimism, was confident that if we would only persist in a policy of containing Soviet power, we might look forward to a successful end of the conflict within ten to fifteen years. This was the burden of Kennan's famous "X" article, written in 1947.

THE period Kennan prophesied as necessary to persist in containing Soviet power has now run its course and been extended by almost a quarter of a century. Yet the end that he and others looked forward to appears no nearer realization. To the contrary, it appears farther away today than it did in the early years of the cold war when America was forming its response to the challenge of Soviet power. Then no more than a large regional power, the Soviet Union today is a truly global power. True, the ideological appeal the Soviet regime once had for much of the world, including the West, is now very largely gone. In its place, however, is a military power that in many ways more than compensates for a declining ideological appeal. This power now directly threatens what it could not threaten at the close of World War II: the physical security of the United States. In the forty years since 1945, the historic security of this country has been transformed in the most radical manner. When the postwar period began, the Soviet Union was able, at best, to threaten only indirectly the security of the United States. Today it is able to threaten our security directly and with weapons that, if ever used, are capable of destroying our physical existence as a nation.

Nothing that has happened since World War II is comparable in significance to this change in American security. Nothing that has happened in these intervening years can be regarded as offsetting, or balancing, this change. There have been, of course, many intervening developments that have profoundly altered the global power structure and, in consequence, American security. The economic and political restoration of Western Europe and Japan, and the break-up of what was once seen as a monolithic Communist camp directed from Moscow, are the most salient and notorious. These and yet other developments have, with few exceptions, worked to America's advantage in its contest with the Soviet Union. But even if we give them full weight and even if we take adequate account of the growing external and internal constraints on Soviet power, there remains the sea change in the American position. Nothing, to repeat, quite compensates for this change.

From this stark perspective, the record of the past forty years seems scarcely to qualify as a success. The threat held out by Soviet power has not diminished. Objectively, when considered in terms of military capability, it has grown inordinately. It has grown inordinately even if we discount the more pessimistic estimates made of that power. And it has grown inordinately even if we give the benefit of doubt to arguments that stress the growing constraints at home and abroad on the exercise of that power. Moreover, the growth in the threat posed by Soviet power cannot be seen only in its objective dimension. At least, it cannot be so seen if we continue to heed the enduring lessons of international politics. One of these lessons, perhaps the simplest and most compelling of all, is that interest tends to grow in rough proportion to power, other things being equal. Of course, in the case of the Soviet Union, other things are not equal.

For a number of reasons, ideology being the most notorious, the Soviet government is not a normal government. Much more so than in the case of a normal government, it is committed to expanding its power and influence. Apart from the countervailing power of the West, it may be

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prevented from doing so by the several emerging constraints on power, domestic and foreign, in which many have placed high expectations and hope. But honesty requires that what must remain for the time being expectation and hope not be accorded a greater status.

THESE simple considerations, to which must be added the spread of Soviet influence to regions where it was not present at the end of World War II, provide the essential outlines of the Right's case for judging the American record on balance a failure. When not pushed to extreme lengths, it carries a good deal of persuasiveness—certainly, more so than the Left's assessment of the record, which emphasizes the neglected possibilities of achieving agreements with the Soviet Union that would have basically altered, if not ended, the great conflict. But if from a certain perspective the American record must be judged a partial failure, the question remains: what course might have been followed that would have promised a more successful outcome? To put the matter concretely, what course might we have followed that would have prevented the Soviet Union from acquiring the military power it did—and, of course, it is still acquiring? For it has been the steady and relentless acquisition of that power that defines the essential element of the Soviet threat. Certainly, without its weapons Moscow is no political threat. And it is only a bad joke to speculate on the use to which the Soviet Union might put—weapons again apart—its economic power.

Without the military power Moscow now disposes of, the problem the Soviet Union poses for the West and the world would be altogether modest. Indeed, there would be no Soviet threat, at least none that bears meaningful comparison to the threat we have experienced and continue to experience. Without the strategic military power Moscow now disposes of, there would be no need to manage the "ultimate challenge" of nuclear weapons, for there would be no such challenge—at least, none that would bear a meaningful resemblance to the challenge that confronts us. We have become so accustomed to thinking and speaking of the "nuclear problem" or the "nuclear challenge" in abstract terms that we have come almost to believe it is a matter whose weight and salience must remain quite independent of the Soviet-American conflict. But this is not the case, for the conflict not only encompasses the nuclear problem, it *is* in very large measure this problem. In this respect, one need only ask oneself what the nuclear problem would be today if the Soviet Union did not possess, and had no prospects of possessing, nuclear weapons. In the world of the 21st century, the "ultimate challenge" of nuclear weapons may exist quite apart from any Soviet-American conflict. But it does not do so at present and it holds out little prospect of doing so in the foreseeable future.

The question remains: what course might we have followed to prevent the Soviet Union from acquiring the power it did, power that when once possessed was bound to be used for expansionist goals? This question is seldom raised by those critics on the Right who negatively appraise the record of the past forty years and imply that this record could have been quite different. Yet it might have been substantially different only if in the early years of the cold war we had undertaken what was in effect, if not in form, a successful preventive war against the Soviet Union. Once victory over the Axis powers had been achieved, and the major territorial consequences of the war had unfolded, it was only through preventive war that the subsequent growth of Soviet military power to what it is today might have been avoided. This simple, yet crucial, point was noted at the time by a few heretical voices. But there was never any real support for this course, whether in policy-making circles or among the public. And even if there had been such support, who knows what the unexpected consequences of a preventive war, even a "successful" preventive war, might have been?

These considerations ought not to be misconstrued. They are not put forward to suggest that in dealing with the Soviet Union there were seldom, if ever, any real alternatives to the courses we did in fact follow on specific issues in contention. In many instances, of course, there were alternative policies. My argument is rather that even had we followed different and more successful policies, the consequences would not have basically altered the growth of Soviet power and the threat held out by this power. This is so whether we consider a different outcome over Berlin (no wall) or Cuba (no Castro) or Vietnam (no defeat) or arms control (no SALT agreements).

IT IS not so much the mistakes of containment, real or fancied, that make up the real indictment of that strategy as it is the strategy itself. Yet the alternative strategies to containment have never proven attractive when seriously considered. In principle, there are but three: confrontation, condominium, and withdrawal. A policy of confrontation seeks to frustrate an adversary at every turn in order to compel him to abandon the conflict and the objects over which the conflict has turned. It does so, primarily, by forcing an adversary to choose between war and the sacrifice of interests he regards, or may regard, as vital. The objective of a policy of confrontation is to triumph, or to prevail, over the adversary, if need be through war. By contrast, the objective of a policy of condominium is to share victory with the adversary through an arrangement whereby both sides gain a part of the interest in contention. These radically different courses for resolving conflict can only be achieved in conjunction with the adversary, whether by compelling him to behave in a certain

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way (confrontation) or by inducing him to do so (condominium). But it is also possible to resolve conflict by avoidance. One party may choose to withdraw from the contest. Whether this will indeed prove possible without great, perhaps even fatal, sacrifice of interest obviously depends upon circumstance. Even if circumstance does permit withdrawal, there is of course always some price to be paid.

Each of these alternatives has been discussed and debated on any number of occasions. What is common to them is that they seek directly to end the great conflict that has dominated the period since World War II, although they would do so in very different ways or for quite different ends. They share the conviction that we cannot continue—or ought not continue—indefinitely to shoulder the burdens and incur the hazards imposed by the conflict. Thus an end there must be, whether through accommodation and compromise, victory, abandonment, or, finally, displacement.

Unfortunately, none of these alternatives appears to hold out much promise. Perhaps the best is a combination of withdrawal and displacement, the abandonment of our major alliances and the subsequent emergence of former allies as powers capable of providing for their own security and of pursuing their own strategic interests. But this alternative appears promising only in relation to the other alternatives. In fact, withdrawal could only be undertaken by risking the prospect we have sought above all to prevent since World War II. For the most persuasive case for withdrawal rests on the assumption that allies will respond to an American *fait accompli*, that a new political world will be called into existence, and that in consequence the great conflict will be largely displaced. The assumption is in the nature of a calculated gamble. Should it fail, as it well might fail, we would then confront the prospect we have labored four decades to prevent.

THE search for alternatives to containment will no doubt continue. It ought not to obscure the considerable success that containment has enjoyed. Containment has not lived up to the expectations that were once generally entertained of it. It does not follow, however, that the strategy must therefore be judged a failure and that the consequences attending containment must be seen as undesirable. Nor does it follow that there is an alternative strategy which could at once redeem the failures of containment while preserving its successes.

In this respect, we need to remind ourselves that the postwar international order is an order inseparable from containment. In a number of ways, this order has been far from ideal. Even so, it has brought to us and our allies an altogether remarkable measure of prosperity and stability. It has effected the great transition to a post-colonial world. And it has marked the beginning of the process of modernization in three-quarters of the world. All this has transpired without a major international war.

These achievements are surely not inconsiderable. They must be credited largely to American policies and power, and particularly to the manner in which we have responded to the challenge of the Soviet Union. If the next forty years are as successful as the past forty years have been, we will have good reason to consider ourselves fortunate.

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Ernest van den Haag: Challenges seldom are "mastered"; mostly they are just managed. We have managed the atomic challenge so far: no bombs have fallen since World War II. But there is no certainty that they never will. "Time and chance happeneth to us all": none of us, though we may overcome illnesses, can be sure of his life. We are more certain of ultimately dying than of surviving each challenge. The same uncertainties must be accepted when collective challenges are managed. Unlike death, war is an artifact. But artifacts—e.g., language—may be harder to change than natural facts—e.g., one's height. Hospitals are not picketed even though, at best, they keep death at bay temporarily and without certainty. Defense departments are, although they do no less for war and can do no more.

We expect more because we know less about the regularities of collective life and are reluctant to recognize the fact that, as long as nations are independent, there will be conflicts, and, as long as they are sovereign, there can be no superior law or court or power to preclude wars which temporarily settle past conflicts while setting the stage for future ones. In the end war is inherent in the ineluctable existence of more than one sovereign nation. Expansionism by any one nation or political system brings it nearer.

Nuclear bombs will not abolish war. Short of disinventing them, which does not seem possible, one can hope that mutual deterrence will continue to restrain nations from using them against one another, at least where non-military targets are concerned. The spontaneous system of deterrence which has worked so far may not be effective in the future, but new systems may be. If we keep a quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient deterrent force, the risk of nuclear war will not increase, although it will remain. Democracies tend

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to forget that *si vis pacem para bellum* ("If you want peace, prepare for war"), that only deterrent strength can secure peace. No power will attack if it runs a high risk of defeat or annihilation. Weakness, on the other hand, invites war. Franklin D. Roosevelt has occasionlly been reproved for intervening in the war against Hitler. I think he could be more properly reproached for promising not to. Had Hitler known, from the beginning, that America would fight on the Allied side, he might have hesitated. Yet, politicians may prefer immediate elective advantages to meeting the totalitarian challenge, which, until there are actual battles, appears distant and abstract. Still, we have learned a little from the experience of World War II, although new generations do not like to be reminded of history. They like to think the world is new and can be saved by good will. In meeting the challenge of totalitarianism we are making some progress, but only history can tell whether it is enough.

Soon we will also have to worry about terrorists getting hold of pocket-sized bombs and about proliferation to various dictators. Treaties will not prevent it. The method used by Israel against Iraq might—but can it always be used without bringing about what it seeks to avert?

It is not just insufficient armaments and various forms of appeasement that prevent us from meeting the totalitarian challenge as well as we could. We still fail to meet, let alone master, the political challenge of totalitarianism. Which is why the power of the Soviet Union has expanded internationally. We have not caught up—although we are trying a little harder now.

Communist propaganda also has chalked up important domestic victories. It has long held sway among the clergy of important Protestant churches. The Reverend William Sloane Coffin (Riverside Church) or Bishop Paul Moore (New York) are examples. Both have been placed into powerful positions not by groups of radicals, but by Rockefellers and other establishment figures. Communist propaganda has infiltrated the Roman Catholic Church as well. Several orders—such as the Maryknolls—might as well be party cells. Not even the Jesuits have so far recovered from Vatican II; some have gone over to the enemy altogether. "Liberation theology" (Marxism with Christian symbols) prospers in Latin America. The U.S. bishops publish silly pastoral letters on matters they do not understand; but the letters clearly foster Marxist ideas about the sources of war (best averted by unilateral nuclear disarmament), the poverty of the poor (somehow due to the wealth of the rich), and what to do about either.

Outside the churches, too, Communists are as successful as ever in recruiting "useful idiots" and forming fellow-traveling *ad hoc* groups—physicians who reveal that being killed by nuclear bombs is bad for your health, ministers who discover that capitalism is un-Christian, and that we need not charity but justice, which they confuse with equality.

In the academy things have gone from bad to worse, as the 60's generation, calmed down a little, but as confused and ignorant as ever, has risen through the academic ranks. There are some first-rate scholars in the social sciences, and there are some in the humanities. They understand what totalitarianism is all about. But the rank and file, which does most of the teaching, hardly could be worse. In the hard sciences the situation is better (with the exception of physics). However, the hard sciences these days attract mainly Chinese, Japanese, or Vietnamese students. Non-Asiatics study literature, or sociology, and are infused with a mentality that regards America as the moral equivalent of totalitarian states. Marxism—the amphetamine of the intellectuals—has had an academic renaissance. Professors spend their time inventing new variants of it, and spreading it in thinly disguised form. Even law schools, such as Harvard, have been infiltrated and colleges allow "activist" students to shout down anyone not pro-totalitarian enough for their taste.

I am comparatively optimistic about the economic and social challenges that confront us. We have made some progress. The market is becoming freer; regulation is declining. Taxes are no longer rising, although government expenditures still are, even if at a slower pace. These timid and slow steps in the right direction are better than what went on before. We are freer from government restraints on politics, sex, and civil liberties than we ever were—although our freedom borders on anarchy if crime rates are considered. But even these are declining slightly as more criminals are imprisoned.

Opportunities for minorities have been greatly increased to rival those of majorities. Anti-Semitism is more unpopular than ever in the Western world. Not content to equalize opportunities, the government (starting with the Nixon administration) has also tried to equalize results by discriminating against the more qualified in order to favor the less qualified.

Starting with the attempt to provide opportunities for minorities, medieval notions of a "fair" price (*pretium justum*), of "fair" wages, jobs, promotions, of "comparable worth," are casting an increasing shadow over the marketplace. Promoters believe that judges should determine what wages, promotions, or jobs are deserved by anybody by comparing education, sex, or race. Often employers are legally compelled to hire, to promote, and to pay according to criteria enforced by the courts. These criteria are independent of market forces and individual merit as determined by employers. If these medieval notions take hold (and they appear to be doing so), if jobs are treated as property distributed and protected by the government,

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Joseph Schumpeter's warning—that the market's evident success will feed political forces and ideologies apt to defeat it—will become more ominous. Meanwhile American productivity in manufacturing has failed to rise, though we still do well in agriculture (no "affirmative action") and, probably, in services. But our tax system continues to penalize production, profits, and saving and to encourage consumption.

Not least, successful capitalists themselves still do not resist selling the rope needed to hang them to the Soviets. (The phrase is attributed to Lenin although not found in his works—*se non è vero è ben trovato.*) How else can one describe our lending to the Soviet bloc and our technology transfers?

Other clouds are on the horizon. We have nearly abolished education for some groups. Although we pay more than ever for schools, less learning takes place; our children are allowed to shun the discipline of the hard sciences; indeed, few of our teachers are competent enough to teach them. A comparison with curricula in Japan is eye-opening. Our schools are preoccupied with sex education; Japanese schools with physics. Proficiency in the former subject has never been shown to benefit from being taught in school (what's wrong with the apprenticeship system?); the latter is learned *only* if taught in school.

All these weaknesses have an impact on our defensive power in the world. We have not met or even fully understood the challenge of totalitarianism. Still, we are managing, largely by relying on the difficulties experienced by the totalitarians. They reap a rich harvest of these each year; perhaps we will continue to manage.

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James Q. Wilson: Among the "arts of peaceful living" to which the "giant's strength" has been turned with greatest effect has been the production of a high and rising standard of living for most Americans. Between the time Elliot Cohen wrote and today, the median income, in constant (i.e., inflation-adjusted) dollars more than doubled. When he wrote, about half of all families lived in owner-occupied homes; today, nearly two-thirds do. When he wrote, fewer than half of all farm families had electricity; today, virtually all do. When he wrote, fewer than half of all adults had graduated from high school; today, over three-fourths have.

Everybody knows this. Of course, some of us are so worried about contemporary problems that we forget what the American economic system has accomplished, but when pressed, we will acknowledge, grudgingly or happily as our ideology inclines us, this success. But when Elliot Cohen launched COMMENTARY, its contributors did not think these things would happen.

The first symposium published in this magazine was on "The Crisis of the Individual." Many of the leading intellectuals of the time—John Dewey and Reinhold Niebuhr among them—contributed to it. Almost to a man, they doubted that America would succeed economically unless there were wholesale changes in its political and economic system. Niebuhr set the tone in the opening essay published in December 1945: "The achievement of a decent minimum of economic security for the masses of our civilization is still an unsolved problem." Though Britain might produce a decent standard of living (presumably because a Labor government had just come to power there), the United States was on a course that risked "social catastrophe." Why? Because the government seemed inclined, with the end of the war, to relax the controls it had exercised over the economy during the emergency. Niebuhr described as "remarkably stupid" the view, held by the possessors of economic power, that the economy would prosper if political restraints were relaxed and free enterprise encouraged. On the contrary: America must find a new way based on the "socialization of some forms of property."

Leo Lowenthal was even more gloomy: "Society has reached the stage of political mass unemployment" because the "large masses of workers have lost all creative relation to the productive process." These "masses," of course, had just finished producing the greatest war machine the world had ever seen and were eager to turn their energies to the task of building new homes and cars and getting on with life after the privations of depression and war. The prospect for economic growth suggested by this combination of energy and deferred purchasing power was lost on Lowenthal, as it was on many economists who had not delved so deeply as he into Marxist analysis. For him, the prospect of widespread unemployment meant that the government would have to channel "surplus workers" into public works in order to keep them under control.

John Dewey hinted at the same view, but, as was his custom, in language so vague as to defy analysis. He conceded that individualism had some merit in generating economic progress, but at root it was a "harmful myth" with a "capacity for evil." Totalitarianism arose, he argued, as a reaction against laissez-faire liberalism and so, presumably, if totalitarianism were to be kept in check, liberalism would have to be altered by subordinating (in some unspecified way) the economic realm to the political one.

Fritz Sternberg was anything but vague. He agreed with "most economists" that private enter-

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prise could not alone produce markets adequate to sustain full employment. It would be necessary for the government to provide jobs directly, but he thought it unlikely that the government would do this, and so "the coming crisis" was probably unavoidable. Not only would this failure cause misery, even more important it would sustain the decadence and cultural stagnation ushered in by capitalism. And if the West continued to maintain a strong military posture, this would hamper the free development of socialism in the Soviet Union and thus prevent the emergence there of a new culture.

Karl Polanyi deplored the "obsolete market mentality" of the United States, based as it was on a destructive individualism. Only "industrial democracy" could save the system. Just what this might entail was left to the reader's imagination, but it would involve managing industry through the "planned intervention of the producers and consumers themselves."

Benjamin Ginzburg was more specific. The key to full employment was to be found in the maintenance of government controls on prices, wages, and profits. Because the nation was restoring free markets and collective bargaining, we were "headed for a crash and a recession."

Almost the only person to shun apocalyptic language was Robert R. Nathan, who noted that the transition from a wartime to a peacetime economy was going rather smoothly. But even he worried that in the long term continued prosperity would require "intelligent economic planning" (an oxymoron?). Without it, our society would face a "downfall" in which minorities would experience a new and vicious round of persecution.

Many persons whose political persuasions were very different from those of the symposium authors would have agreed that the United States economy was in trouble. The Committee for Economic Development (CED), a group of prominent business executives, was founded in 1942 by Paul Hoffman and William Benton because they were concerned about the prospect of a postwar depression and the need for industrial planning to avoid it. It hired a number of economists to figure out what should be done. By happy accident (their data were shaky, their inferences simplistic, their assumptions erroneous), the economists persuaded the CED that a depression was not imminent. This lucky guess gave the CED enormous prestige and overnight made it a rival of the old National Association of Manufacturers and Chamber of Commerce.

In 1945, the unemployment rate was 1.9 percent. Nobody believed it could remain that low, and it did not, increasing in 1946, as war production ended, to 3.9 percent. But there it stayed, except for a small recession around 1949, when it rose to 5.9 percent. Ten years after the COMMENTARY contributors had predicted mass unemployment and social collapse, the unemployment rate was 4.4 percent; twenty years after the prediction, it was 4.5 percent. The giant was indeed strong, far stronger than many had imagined.

How could so many people have been so wrong? There was, of course, the memory of 1929, supposedly the death rattle of capitalism. The New Deal had not ended the depression; it had, at best, coped with it. The war, which did help end the depression, brought with it all manner of economic controls and planning. It was not hard to suppose that there had been a connection between the recovery and the controls and thus to believe that a continued recovery required continued controls.

There was also the memory of fascism and of how certain parts of German big business supported Hitler. Again, it was not difficult to convert a historical correlation into a politico-economic cause: if Krupp had supported Hitler, it must have been that Hitler was necessary for Krupp, and by extension for all of business and by further extension for all of capitalism. The very title of the symposium is suggestive—the "crisis of the individual." The individual was obviously threatened by fascism and totalitarianism, but perhaps also by capitalism even though capitalism seemed to depend on individual preferences for its motive force. Dewey and others tried to save individualism from capitalism by making a distinction between political and economic liberty: the first kind of liberty was sacrosanct, the latter expendable. Polanyi argued that capitalism might appear to protect individuals, but ultimately it would destroy them because it would treat them as means to an end (profit), not as ends in themselves.

A good deal of passionate socialist dogma was unleashed in the pages of the magazine. The tone of almost every symposium contribution was hortatory, even religious; scarcely a single fact was asserted, a single institution described, or a single policy subjected to close evaluation. In the authors' defense, one might argue that the dogma was not checked against the facts since in 1945 there appeared to be no relevant facts—normal historical forces had been suspended by a four-year war emergency, and the future had not yet revealed itself. But clearly, the fundamental drive of the democratic-socialist mentality was alive and well, frustrated by years of wartime circumspection.

Allied with that passion was a thinly veiled contempt for bourgeois culture and its most visible manifestation, the business system. Except for Robert Nathan's piece, almost every contribution to the symposium, even when it was nominally addressing economic matters, was really about American culture. None found much to admire in it.

In 1945, the socialist myth had not yet died. For some, it has still not died despite countless exam-

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ples in China, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere that it is a myth. In more measured tones and under more discreet labels, it is still revived from time to time—Tom Hayden's "Campaign for Economic Democracy" and certain versions of an "industrial policy."

The success of the American economy is not complete; indeed, it cannot be complete so long as individuals differ in abilities and preferences. Wants are limitless; resources are scarce. Given the inevitability of problems, nothing is easier than to make each new problem a reason for reviving, in some genteel guise, a part of the socialist myth. OPEC has caused gasoline shortages? The government should ration fuel. There is inflation in the early 1970's? We should install price and wage controls. Our older smokestack industries are losing markets? The government should plan investments.

BUT the American giant has indisputably and conspicuously failed in at least one regard. It has not solved the problem presented by a large and, apparently, growing underclass. Poverty takes many forms in the United States, many of which are technically not hard to manage. If some retired persons slip below the poverty line, we can raise their social-security benefits. If unemployment among ready-to-work adults goes up, we can encourage investment and stimulate demand. But when the bottom third of black Americans shows little sign of progress after twenty years of special job, welfare, and schooling programs; when the majority of black children are destined to live at some time during their lives in poor female-headed families; when the underclass is disproportionately victimized by crime and drug abuse—when these familiar facts are once again recited, it is clear that the "arts of peaceful living" have been spread most unevenly across the landscape.

One of the greatest changes I have witnessed in the last twenty years is the slow but steady loss of confidence among intellectuals and policy-makers that they know how to solve this problem. In the 1950's, everyone I knew assumed that the passage and vigorous enforcement of civil-rights laws would lead to economic gains for all blacks. In the 1960's, most people I knew believed that compensatory programs in job training and job provision would help make up for decades of neglect and oppression. There is evidence that these laws and programs did help many blacks and other minorities. But by the 1970's, black scholars such as Andrew Brimmer began to note a developing schism: though many black families were rapidly moving ahead, others were falling farther behind. The unemployment rate among young black males rose more or less steadily throughout the 1960's and 1970's. Their labor-force participation rate dropped. The proportion of black children growing up in female-headed households rose, and these households were so much more likely than two-parent ones to be poor that observers began speaking of the "feminization of poverty." The discouraging results of the experiments in providing a guaranteed annual income—a negative income tax—did not help matters much. Families receiving the benefits were much more likely to break up than those that did not.

By the 1980's, I knew hardly anyone who was any longer confident that he or she had the answer to this problem. When in 1965 Daniel Patrick Moynihan published his famous report on the black family, he was roundly denounced by many liberals for having suggested that civil rights, important as they were, might not be enough. When in 1985 he used the Godkin Lectureship at Harvard to say much the same thing (except to note that things had gotten much worse), he was praised in the editorial columns of most liberal papers. Neither in 1965 nor in 1985 did he claim he had a solution to this problem. What had changed in twenty years was that now only a few hardy souls claimed that they had a solution, either.

The hardy souls are divided into hostile camps. Charles Murray has argued that the welfare system so encourages dependency that only by scrapping it can we provide the incentives necessary to get poor people into the workplace and to stop teen-age mothers from having babies out of wedlock. The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation has suggested that "supported work" training projects can place long-term AFDC recipients in jobs that pay better and last longer than the jobs held by welfare mothers who lack this special training. Glenn Loury has argued that the black community must address the cultural problem in its midst through voluntary action designed to encourage schooling, regular work, and the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. (I am told that in some communities the NAACP sponsors radio messages urging young black men not to impregnate women unless they are prepared to accept the responsibilities of fatherhood.)

These approaches restate three of the four major ways of looking at poverty—as a problem of incentives, as a problem of skills, and as a problem of culture. The fourth view—that poverty results simply from a lack of jobs, which in turn reflects a lack of sufficient aggregate demand—is no longer asserted so confidently as it was during the heyday of Keynesian economics, for the very good reason that the underclass has grown without much regard to general economic conditions. The four approaches are not mutually exclusive, though to hear some partisans speak, one might think they were. In the 1960's the government was galvanized by the debate; the victors, by and large, were the proponents of skills, and so we had the Job Corps, Head Start, and the Neighborhood Youth Corps. Today, there is scarcely any serious political debate at all, except in the journals. The

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problem of the underclass, and of its policy corollary, "welfare reform," has become a graveyard of political reputations. Serious statesmen have abandoned the field to defeatists and to demagogues. Though ideas exist, and some impressive experimental evidence has been obtained, we are not much closer to forming a consensus about what should or can be done with the underclass than we ever were.

And this brings us, in a sense, full circle. The first symposium in this magazine defined America's problems in cultural terms. Though I think the analysis then was profoundly wrong, I cannot deny the correctness of the underlying assumption—that, at root, the most important economic and political issues are defined by how we think of ourselves and our society.

We are beginning to see America anew. The limits of state action are now more clearly understood than they were forty years ago when government controls were thought necessary to produce economic abundance, or even twenty years ago when government subsidies were thought to be a sufficient remedy for the unevenness of that abundance. But whatever those limits may be, accepting them should not lead us to suppose that a healthy economy will alone produce a healthy society. Both that economy and that society have cultural foundations which we are only gradually coming to appreciate.

James Q. Wilson *is Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government at Harvard. His latest book, written with Richard J. Herrnstein, is* Crime and Human Nature *(Simon & Schuster).*

Albert Wohlstetter: I would like to say a little about how Elliot Cohen's three challenges are and are not connected.

It was natural, in the immediate wake of the prodigies of common effort made by our Allies as well as ourselves in winning the war against the Axis powers, to think in terms of mustering a comparable cooperative effort to conquer the arts of peace, including the art of keeping the peace. Manhattan Project physicists proposed to deal with the challenges of civilian production, the atomic bomb, and the problem of averting war all at once in one heroic worldwide effort, a kind of super Manhattan Project in which nuclear swords would be converted to plowshares. Nuclear energy would be turned to the production of cheap and abundant electric power under international control. The civilian reactors would breed and use plutonium for peaceful purposes and a world Atomic Development Authority with vast powers would assure that the plutonium could never be used for weapons of war.

The urgent effort, which was embodied in the Baruch Plan, foundered when the Soviets walked out of the United Nations Nuclear Disarmament Committee at the end of 1946. In one of the many ironies affecting vast peacetime projects undertaken with the best of intentions, the Atoms for Peace programs which stemmed from this early effort have not replaced nuclear weapons. They have subsidized the spread of the technology and fissile materials quickly usable in bombs.

The physicists who organized themselves politically in the scientists' movement to influence key governmental choices in the conversion to peace, failed for several reasons. They had understood very little of the decentralized way in which economic choices are made by producers and consumers in a market economy and the way that in turn has fostered revolutionary increases in available raw materials, in production, and in standards of living; and they therefore greatly exaggerated the economic prospects of nuclear electric power. Their earnest and passionate desire to turn the invention of a weapon of war toward peaceful ends led them to gloss over insoluble technical problems in "denaturing" plutonium so that it could not be used for weapons. And most fundamentally of all, they underestimated the depth and durability of the Soviet totalitarian threat to the free societies.

In the arts of producing an abundance of civilian goods, the United States is the kind of giant which performs best without an overall governmental plan that musters cooperation on a national, not to say an international, scale. It works best when it relies on the multiplicity of smaller-scale decisions by producers and consumers responding to the information embodied in prices. That does not mean that the democracies are incapable of responding to challenges even in time of peace that call for working together in the service of some larger, shared political goal. The Marshall Plan for the economic recovery of Europe showed how the democracies could muster the courage and the will to accomplish a great common purpose in peacetime. But that was in an intense crisis where the threat of economic collapse and Communist subversion and takeover was plain. The purpose of restoring the viability of the European economies was more or less unambiguously shared by all the West European states and America. And that purpose could be achieved in a finite, relatively short period of time.

The democracies can rise to such clear, finite challenges but these generally occur in the immediate aftermath of a great war. Or during a crisis of common danger that may be the immediate precursor to a war. In the latter case the democ-

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racies may be slow to recognize their common interests and the need for swift collective action. Then it may be too late. The West finds it even more difficult to face a steady or intermittent long-term erosion of the military balance. In the last two decades it has permitted the Soviets drastically to change what they call the "correlation of forces" in their favor. And the West has facilitated the worsening of its position by negotiating arms agreements which are nominally bilateral but which, in operation, we and the Soviets interpret as constraining them much less than they constrain us. The West has developed a strategic theory and a declaratory policy implying that the worsening doesn't make much difference: no matter what the imbalance in the Soviets' favor, the West, it is supposed, can always deter a Soviet attack by threatening suicidally to destroy a few Soviet cities.

Our allies continue to rely excessively on an American nuclear threat to deter a Soviet nuclear or non-nuclear attack directed selectively and exclusively at critical targets in Europe, or on its weakly defended flanks, or on areas outside of Western Europe on which the alliance depends. And the European as well as much of the American political establishment resists any attempts to make an American response to an attack on Europe—or the United States—less than suicidal. In short, our handling of the second challenge Elliot Cohen described, that of atomic weapons, has been inadequate and, over the last two decades or so, getting worse.

A good many conservatives have reacted to the immobility of the Europeans in the face of the increasing Soviet threat by suggesting one variant or another of the withdrawal of American military forces from Europe and possibly the end of NATO. (A resurgence of isolationism affected liberals somewhat earlier.) What underlies this view, aside from impatience, is the idea that the United States has been undertaking more than its share of the burden of defending Europe, that there is a more or less unambiguous threat to Europe which is fixed in extent and on the whole largely independent of the threat to the United States, and that the Europeans, recognizing the need for a given amount of defense to meet the given threat, will supply more if we supply less. Americans tend to think they have understood very well the Soviet threat to Western Europe and what is necessary to meet it.

On both sides of the Atlantic now there is much talk about divergencies in interest between Europe and the United States and differences in analysis and policy that are explained by these divergent interests. My own view is that there is much in common in West European and American views. However, I would stress our identical errors. We, as well as all the major countries in Europe, have drifted toward a policy of suicidal bluff. We all, in the last twenty or so years, used such bluffs to rationalize cutting in half the fraction of GNP devoted to defense and doubling the percentage allotted to social spending. NATO as a whole has focused on the most implausible Soviet threat, that of a totally destructive and possibly suicidal Soviet attack on all of NATO. We have paid too little attention to the more plausible threats of subversion and terror directed at some areas of critical importance to all the major members of NATO. We have neglected threats that divide NATO in peacetime and invite a retreat from alliance into neutrality; and neglected even more the possible Soviet wartime strategies that would exploit these peacetime divisions within NATO. The Soviets could attack a weakly armed flank of NATO or a vital area just outside the NATO boundaries such as the Persian Gulf. That would give various NATO countries an opportunity to opt out for the sake of immediate safety at the expense of their autonomy in the longer run. There seems little doubt as to the effectiveness of such a Soviet strategy so long as members of NATO think of war as suicidal.

If the United States were to pull out of Europe, that would mark an enormous success for current Soviet strategy. Conservative economists who have suggested American withdrawal don't face the issue as to whether American and West European contributions to the common defense are complementary or substitutes. But where one of us does less the other has also tended to do less, not more—taking it as confirmation that the threat really isn't so bad. Americans and Europeans have more often than not imitated each other's acts of diminishing contribution to defense. In the 1960's the Europeans reduced the fraction of resources spent on defense more than we did. In the 1970's we reduced more than they. There have of course been some minor bumps in the curve of European and American deterioration relative to Soviet military power. But over two decades both the U.S. and Western Europe drastically reduced their efforts in defense.

Our vital contribution during the Marshall Plan increased Europe's resolve to defend itself. If the United States were to take its military forces out of Europe, the most likely result would be the collapse of Europe's shaky will and its accommodation to the Soviets. Even then, the Soviets, if they were to use force, would be likely to choose the least risky way of extending their power in Europe, namely, by projecting force into a critical area on the fringe of Europe. The United States could not afford then to let that critical area or Europe itself come under Soviet control. Right now our problem is reinforcing the 300,000 men we have under arms in Europe to help the Europeans defend themselves against a Soviet combined-arms attack. If we were to take them out, we would find it even more difficult to bring ap-

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propriate force to bear against such an aggression. We expended enormous effort in keeping Britain from falling to Hitler in the early years of World War II and so preserved it as a launching platform for the liberation of Europe. The costly island-hopping campaign in the Pacific which we had to undertake after the outbreak of war was equally essential for the defeat of Japan. It is a great mistake to think that American bases in Europe contribute only to the defense of Europe and not the United States.

In the last twenty years we reduced our access to bases and air space in places such as Turkey, which is of the greatest strategic importance not only in the Eastern Mediterranean but for the defense of the Persian Gulf. Like the British withdrawal East of Suez from Aden and Yemen and other key places, this meant a very large shift in the correlation of forces. (Participants in the British debate in the 1960's found it hard to believe Britain had any strategic interests in the Persian Gulf which it had dominated for 150 years!) Withdrawal from Europe could complete the process of deterioration.

FINALLY, the United States and the West cannot avoid the challenge of totalitarianism, but we have time and again failed to face up to its depth and durability. After Hitler turned on his Soviet partners in 1941, the British came to their aid. Stalin nonetheless insisted that the British recognize his acquisition of half of Poland and the Baltic states. The British yielded and the Americans went along in spite of the Atlantic Charter and in spite of the fact that Britain had gotten into the war in response to the invasion of Poland. Ever since then, Western leaders have found it hard to face the fact that no matter how sweetly we behave toward them, the Soviets cannot tolerate coexistence with a democratic West indefinitely. The democracies, after faltering at the end of the war in the face of Soviet expansion, did muster their strength to form an alliance. That alliance, flawed as it is, remains essential. Norman Podhoretz is right in insisting that freedom in the United States cannot be separated from continuing freedom in other parts of the world.

Neither the United States nor the West European countries can really get a free ride. We are no longer able to defend our essential interests in the autonomy of Europe without Europe. And the Europeans surely cannot defend them without the United States, in part because their freedom, like ours, cannot be separated from the fate of some places outside the continent of Europe. Our genuine alternatives have to do with how to defend these interests in ways that complement each other. We are not doing very well. Nonetheless it seems to me that both pessimism and optimism are only forms of self-indulgence. We have only the hard choices of finding out how to do better.

ALBERT WOHLSTETTER *is research director of PAN Heuristics in Marina del Rey, California, and president of the European American Institute for Security Research.*

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At Ease

A CERTAIN PEOPLE: AMERICAN JEWS AND THEIR LIVES TODAY. By CHARLES E. SILBERMAN. *Summit Books. 458 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by RUTH R. WISSE

I AM told that my grandfather, who during World War II was killed in the Bialystok ghetto at the age of eighty-two, was in the habit of taking his pulse three times a day. My father, too, before his heart gave out, would often stand, face taut, with his right hand held gingerly by two fingers of the left. It was thus no surprise to find myself part of a community that regularly conducts surveys and self-studies like nurses applying thermometers in a hospital. The Jewish preoccupation with health is intended to be protective.

Until recently, American Jewish health charts were a cause of deep concern. Fewer births and a fast-growing rate of intermarriage had fostered predictions of decline in the world's largest center of Jewish population. The severest prediction had been of a drop from about 5.7 million in 1979 to fewer than a million within a century. Gloomier even than the numerical balance was the forecast for Jewish "identity"—a term sufficiently vague for the thing it designates. By the early 1970's, every branch of organized Jewish communal life had declared a crisis in young leadership and was fretting over the waning interest of young people in retaining their Jewish association.

Then, about five years ago, the mood began to shift. Several sociologists and communal workers started to question the findings of their colleagues. Was the devastation really as thorough as had been thought? The Havurah (religious fellowship) movement, which had, in common with the generation of the 60's whence it emerged, a unique capacity for "feeling good about itself," brought a certain mood of satisfaction into the larger community as well. Most important, the general upsurge of optimism ushered in by the first Reagan administration buoyed the Jews, who are always exceedingly sensitive to shifts in the national spirit, and made them feel that perhaps their house, too, was being put in order.

Although he does not credit this last-named cause, Charles Silberman in *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today* sets out to show that the new optimism is appropriate because it is warranted by the facts. While some Jews, still bearing scars of recent history, may be alarmed and bewildered by the dramatic changes in their condition in American society since World War II, they have no reason, Silberman writes, to fear the consequences of their good fortune, because "they are not heading for a fall." American society *is* different from those that preceded it—pluralistic, democratic, and essentially tolerant; and the gains that Jews have made in it are to be fully trusted.

Told as a story of rags to riches, the book begins with a brief history of modern anti-Semitism, under which Jews were oppressed in Europe and discriminated against more subtly in America. Silberman explains that anti-Semitism is no longer a significant factor in America; its disappearance has marked the final stages of Jewish emancipation. As long as Jewishness was a liability, those born into the condition were naturally burdened by their heritage, having to choose between ethnic loyalty and success in the larger public domain. But now that Jewishness is no longer problematic, the individual Jew can remain true both to his ambition and to his people, without the necessity of inner conflict.

This benign environment, far from threatening survival (as many had assumed), nurtures the Jew, so much so that in Silberman's estimation even intermarriage, once considered the measure of assimilation, may yet prove to be an instrument of survival. As growing acceptance of Jews among Gentiles is balanced by a growing acceptance of intermarriage among Jews, mixed-marriage couples who once felt shunned are now able "to be integrated into the Jewish community and thus to identify themselves as Jews." Citing a wide range of statistical data, Silberman contends that, with Jewishness no longer a social handicap, intermarried couples may well bring up their children as Jews, resulting in a possible gain to the people of 40 percent! (The exclamation point is Silberman's own.) Moreover, the cultural and religious renewal that he sees under way in all sectors of Jewish life makes such a life increasingly attractive to converts and to the Jewish young.

From this sociological analysis of a religious community's success, the author reaches certain political conclusions. "American Jews are secure —secure enough, in fact, to risk displeasing a second-term Republican President by remaining liberal Democrats." Attributing Jewish success in America to the country's essentially secular and pluralistic atmosphere of liberal tolerance, Silberman urges Jews to stay true to this real tradition of Americanism even as they undergo a kind of Jewish revival. He ends his work with an afterword on Bitburg in which he congratulates American Jews both for having behaved like natives (by expressing their pain and outrage on the occasion of the President's visit to a German cemetery containing the graves of Nazi stormtroopers) and for their readiness to "speak truth to power."

AS THIS summary suggests, Silberman's book, though based on a good deal of reading, is less a critical analysis than an argument for a certain view of American Judaism and its adherents. Advertising his

RUTH R. WISSE, *whose articles and reviews appear regularly in these pages, teaches Yiddish literature at McGill University.*

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candor ("Readers are entitled to know who is speaking to them and from what perspective"), he uses this as a license to move freely from one plane of writing to another, insinuating himself as advocate whenever the statistical evidence for his position is questionable, buttressing the data with a variety of anecdotal "items," heightening the soluble problems, skirting the intractable ones, and dropping his political message to add the final flavor like a cherry atop an ice-cream sundae. All this is done in the sweetly reasoned tones of an arbiter, bringing happy prospects to a fretful tribe.

Silberman's idea of Judaism is similarly pliant. He favors a visible Judaism—the retention of Jewish-sounding names, the observation of Jewish holidays, and strong identification with Israel—but he resists any of the nay-saying features of the religion, let alone its system of imperatives. The word *halakhah*, the Jewish way of life under religious law, scarcely appears in the book. Silberman believes, rather, that individual autonomy, "finding an approach to Judaism that has meaning for oneself, is the greatest *strength* of the current Jewish renewal movement, not its fatal flaw." Citing with approval Mordecai Kaplan's statement that "the Jewish religion existed for the Jewish people, and not the Jewish people for the Jewish religion," he sees the vindication of this thesis in the actual behavior patterns of American Jews, whose supermarket approach to their religious civilization allows them to choose those customs that fit in best with their current lives. Yet even Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionism (the branch of Judaism to which Silberman belongs), might have been surprised to find his views thus interpreted as a triumph of sociology over religion.

If American Judaism does have a fatal flaw today, Silberman, for one, believes it is to be found among the Orthodox. Describing a neo-Orthodox commune in California, for example, he momentarily drops his customarily amiable tone:

> There was a decided cultlike atmosphere to the *shiur* (study group) [*sic*: *shiur* means a Talmud lesson] I attended in 1979. It was evident in the authoritarian manner in which Rabbi Lapin conducted the "discussion" and, even more, in the sheeplike way in which the forty-five or fifty participants accepted his pronouncements as if they were profound and revealed truths. They were not. To someone familiar with the rabbinic commentaries on the biblical passage under discussion—Abraham's argument with God over the latter's proposed destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah—Lapin's comments seemed banal as well as unpleasantly chauvinistic. Yet no one in this group of seemingly bright, articulate young men and women questioned or challenged anything Lapin said, even when he was denigrating Christianity in what I found to be a crude and offensive way. "They don't want to be bothered any

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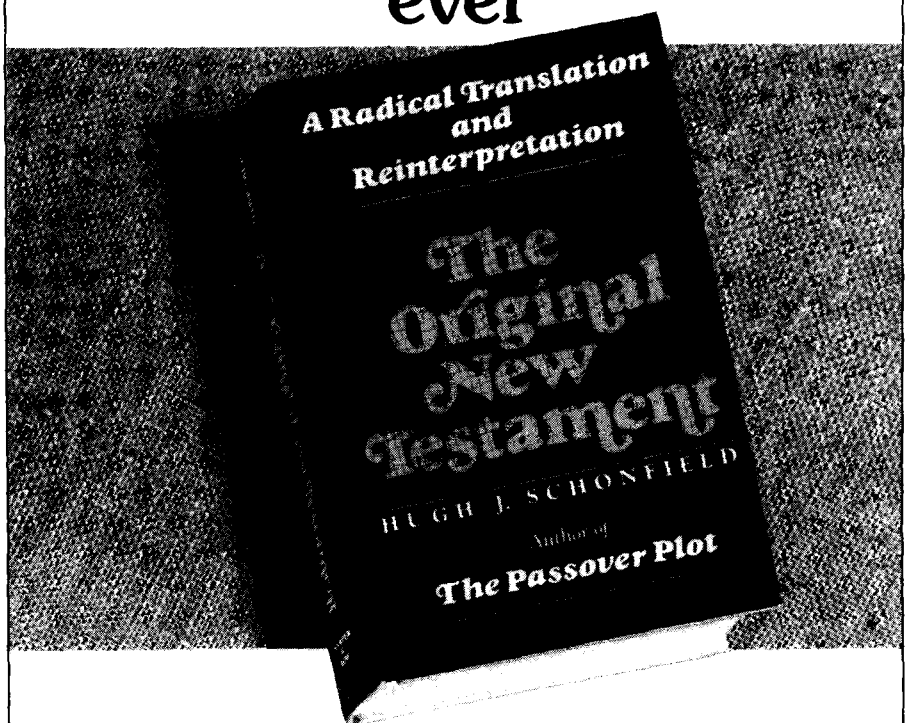

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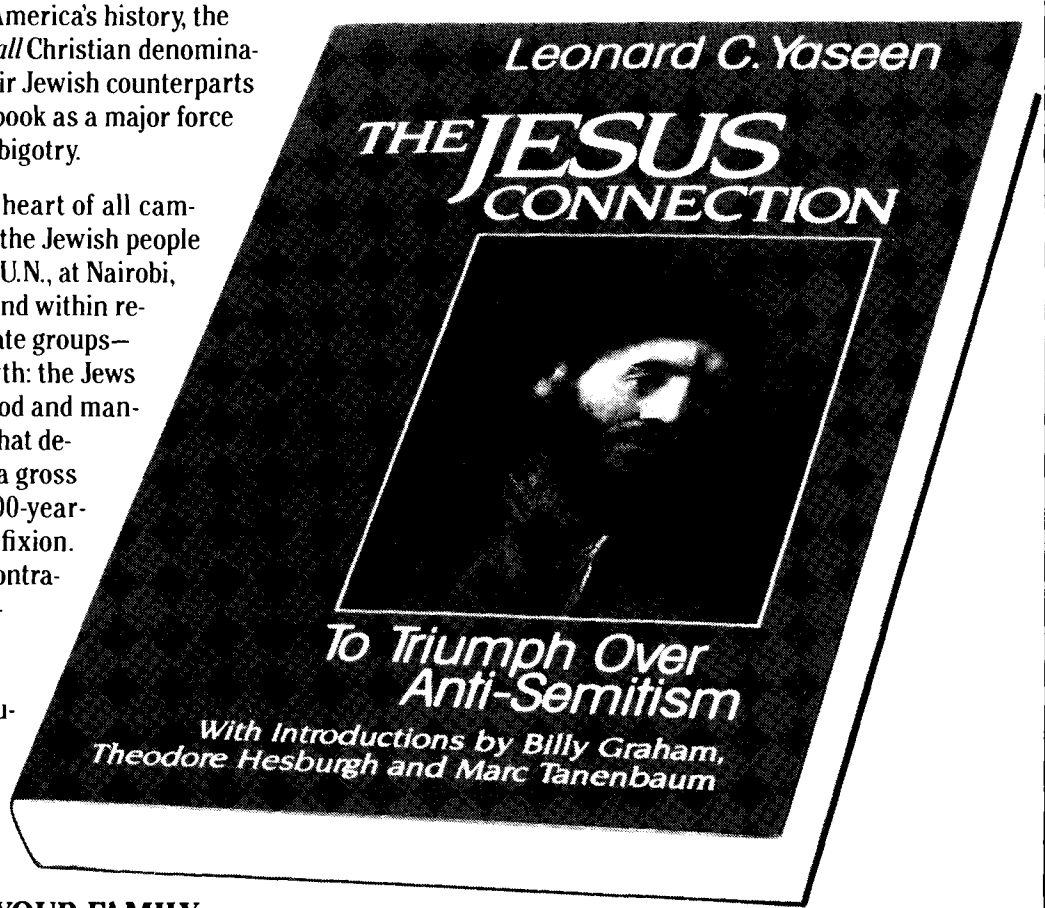
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more," an Orthdox rabbi friend explained to me, "They are running away from complexity."

So there are, after all, limits to Silberman's approval of Jewish religious heterogeneity. Still, it is bracing to find a critical edge in a book that is elsewhere so soppy—as, for example, several pages later, when he glowingly offers the following item:

> The headline on the front-page article of the September 30-October 5, 1984 issue of *Our Town*, a weekly newspaper serving Manhattan's fashionable Upper East Side, read, "The New Year's Call for Renewal." The article that followed, written by Harvey M. Tattelbaum, rabbi of the Temple Shaaray Tefila, a Reform congregation in the neighborhood, concluded with an invitation "to join us on Rosh Hashanah afternoon for our 'Tashlich' service (casting away of our sins) at the East River about 81st Street . . . at 3:00 P.M. New breath is infused into an ancient ritual. The Shofar is blown, songs are sung, prayers are intoned. It has become our Synagogue's Rosh Hashanah 'happening' by the waters."

In this, the very stuff of parody, Silberman seems to find not only a sign of "a notable return to traditional rituals, ceremonies, and forms of worship," but intimations of that independence of spirit, tolerance, and intellectual complexity of which he so approves (and which, as anyone knows who ever attended one, is so characteristic of "happenings").

IT IS therefore advisable, in reading this celebration of American Jews, to keep in mind the nature of our guide. Though he tells us at the outset that he is an American and a Jew, Silberman speaks above all as a liberal, determined to make the script fit the message he wants to deliver. Yet his is a liberalism with a new twist. When he urges Jews to remain liberal Democrats it is not because, as an earlier generation of liberal universalists once maintained, doing so would be better for the world, but because, in his view, the liberal agenda best serves the interests of American Jews in the 1980's. If Jews were to quit the Democratic party, for example, Jesse Jackson might have an easier time pushing the party toward an openly Third World stance on foreign policy. Similarly, if the Jews were to abandon their liberal attitudes on social issues and on the question of church-state relations, they would be helping to foster a religious extremism that would ultimately turn ugly against them. Or again, if Jews focus too single-mindedly on narrow issues like American support for Israel, they may lose that very influence in the general community that has made their support of Israel so effective. Thus does Silberman argue for the liberal agenda on the basis of sheer Jewish self-interest.

There are at least two objections

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to this. The first and more obvious one is that Jewish self-interest may dictate a rather different strategy. The historian Salo Baron pointed out some time ago that in the arena of power politics, "no greater misfortune can befall a group than being taken for granted." By this standard alone, the growing numbers of Jews in Republican ranks strengthens Jewish bargaining power in *both* parties. Any true friend of American blacks would try to impress upon them the importance of this truth.

Secondly, though he begins his book by expressing relief that Jews no longer have to be "nice," i.e., to make themselves publicly inconspicuous by lowering their voices and trying to fit in with the crowd, Silberman's concluding prescription amounts to nothing more than the advocacy of this same "niceness" in the political sphere. Yet either anti-Semitism has waned, in which case Jews are free to vote and to take political action according to their own best lights, or it has not, in which case Silberman's assertions of strength and safety are wrong, and Jews must be careful and canny in the alliances they forge. And if, as Silberman contends, American Jews *are* truly unthreatened, then all the more must they make support for Israel the focal point of their political activity, precisely because Israel is not similarly secure.

In the light of his larger thesis, Silberman's comments on Bitburg are particularly obtuse. The tendency to define the President's visit as a "Jewish issue" should have been strenuously resisted by the Jewish community, because here, certainly, was an insult to an entire country that had fought the Nazis, an insult that demanded a cry of "pain and outrage" from all Americans alike. Elie Wiesel's reproach to the President was eloquently appropriate; he was there in the White House as a survivor of the Holocaust. But in allowing the media to turn Bitburg into a "Jewish issue," American Jewish leaders revealed their own lingering insecurities, and an identification with the victim's role that does not sit well with their allegedly newfound dignity.

More objectionable than Silberman's political analysis, however, is his political posture, which seems to be lacking in principle. It is awkward to accuse a man of failing his own beliefs, but the Jewish alliance with traditional liberal values that Silberman invokes was based, after all, on a vision of liberty and justice that seemed to many to have come right out of Judaism itself. If Jews once gravitated ideologically to the Left, it was not only because this seemed to them the path of advancement, but because the promise of equal opportunity, mutual tolerance, and greater dignity for the individual appeared to universalize certain basic tenets of the Jewish religion, and was a program that would benefit all mankind as it benefited them.

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The turn against this liberal ideology, or rather against what has become of it, is likewise based on a larger vision of liberty and justice rooted in the Jewish way of life. Though neoconservatives like Irving Kristol may and do try to show that their views coincide with Jewish political interests, their critique of liberalism is based not so much on calculations of personal or communal gain as on the failure of liberalism itself to achieve its stated ends. The debate, in other words, is still over what used to be called "the search for a better world," and Jews who contribute to it still draw inspiration from their indigenous traditions.

Silberman's failure to appreciate the moral seriousness of Judaism is thus coupled with his failure to grasp the moral seriousness of the current Jewish political debate. He may be right about the strength of American Jewry, but the real evidence for that strength is to be sought in areas beyond his reach.

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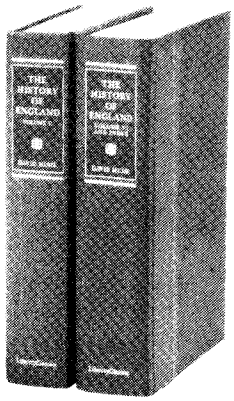

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The Three W's

THE OXFORD BOOK OF CHILDREN'S VERSE IN AMERICA. Edited by DONALD HALL. *Oxford University Press. 319 pp. $18.95*

Reviewed by ROBERT ALTER

DONALD HALL has done an exemplary job in assembling from the pages of long defunct children's magazines and antique anthologies this panorama of poems for American children from *The Bay Psalm Book* (1640) to Richard Wilbur, John Updike, and Shel Silverstein. Newly discovered gems shine alongside old chestnuts like "The Deacon's Masterpiece," "The Village Blacksmith," "Little Orphant Annie," and "Casey at the Bat," but it is only after the middle of the 19th century that this becomes the sort of book you can read with your children page after page for sheer delight. Before that, the chief value of the poems for most readers will be as historical documentation of changing views of childhood in America. Linked to that issue is an intriguing queston raised by this chronology of poems about what is fit reading for children and what are the connections between children's literature and adult literature.

The three staples of children's poetry are what I shall call the three w's—whimsy, wordplay, and wickedness. The first two of these qualities, because they involve having fun with words, seem particularly associated with childhood, though in fact they are central in the work of many of the best English writers, from Shakespeare and Ben Jonson to Sterne to Joyce and Nabokov. In the earliest phase of poetry for children represented in

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the Hall anthology, there is precious little in the way of whimsy and wordplay while there are great double helpings of wickedness, for in the grim perspective of the Puritans children are not creatures apart but fully responsible heirs, like adults, to the terrible legacy of Original Sin. Thus, a chorus of those who died in infancy in "The Day of Doom" by Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705) laments to God, ". . . why was our nature,/depraved and forlorn?/Why so defiled, and made so vile/whilst we were yet unborn?" The Lord answers with unswerving Calvinist rigor, "for I do save/none but my own elect," offering the children only the minimal consolation that, since they did not have the time on earth to sin as much as their elders, they will be allotted "the easiest room in Hell."

These early Puritan texts are dour and forbidding but in their unpleasant way they have a certain dignity and authenticity precisely because they treat children like everybody else. By the 19th century, with the waning of the Puritan tradition and the waxing of a diffuse romanticism, childhood comes more and more to be seen as a faery realm removed from adult existence. The poets, alas, still had to contend, as did Michael Wigglesworth, with an appallingly high rate of mortality in infancy and early childhood, so death persists as a frequent topic in these poems. (In our medically happier age, death would seem to be virtually taboo in children's poetry.) But when childhood is conceived utterly without wickedness, as in the saccharine terms of Longfellow's "The Children's Hour" ("I hear in the chamber above me/The patter of little feet,/The sound of a door that is opened,/And voices soft and sweet"), the death of children is translated into the emotional evasion of genteel kitsch: bright souls ascending amidst the softly fluttering wings of angels, leaving behind some cherished toy (Hannah F. Gould, "The Dying Child's Request"; Eugene Field, "Little Boy Blue"; and a number of other poems in the anthology). For the most part, this 19th-century predilection to sentimentalize childhood produces not poetry for children, however much

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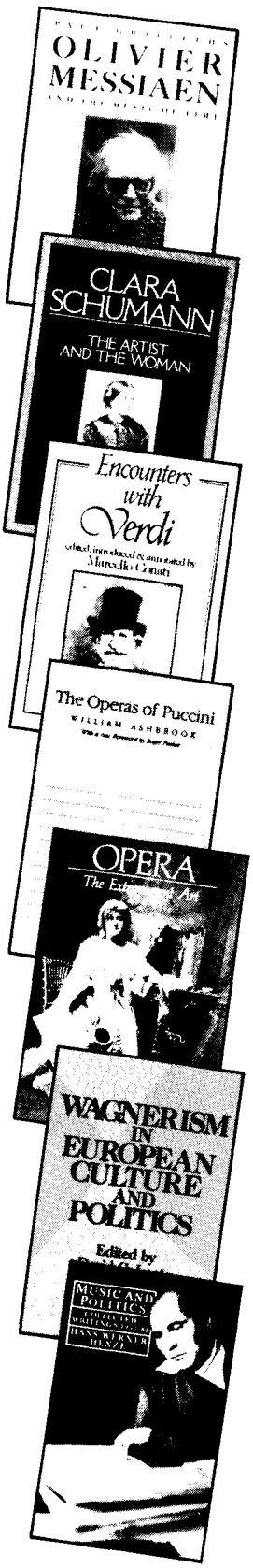

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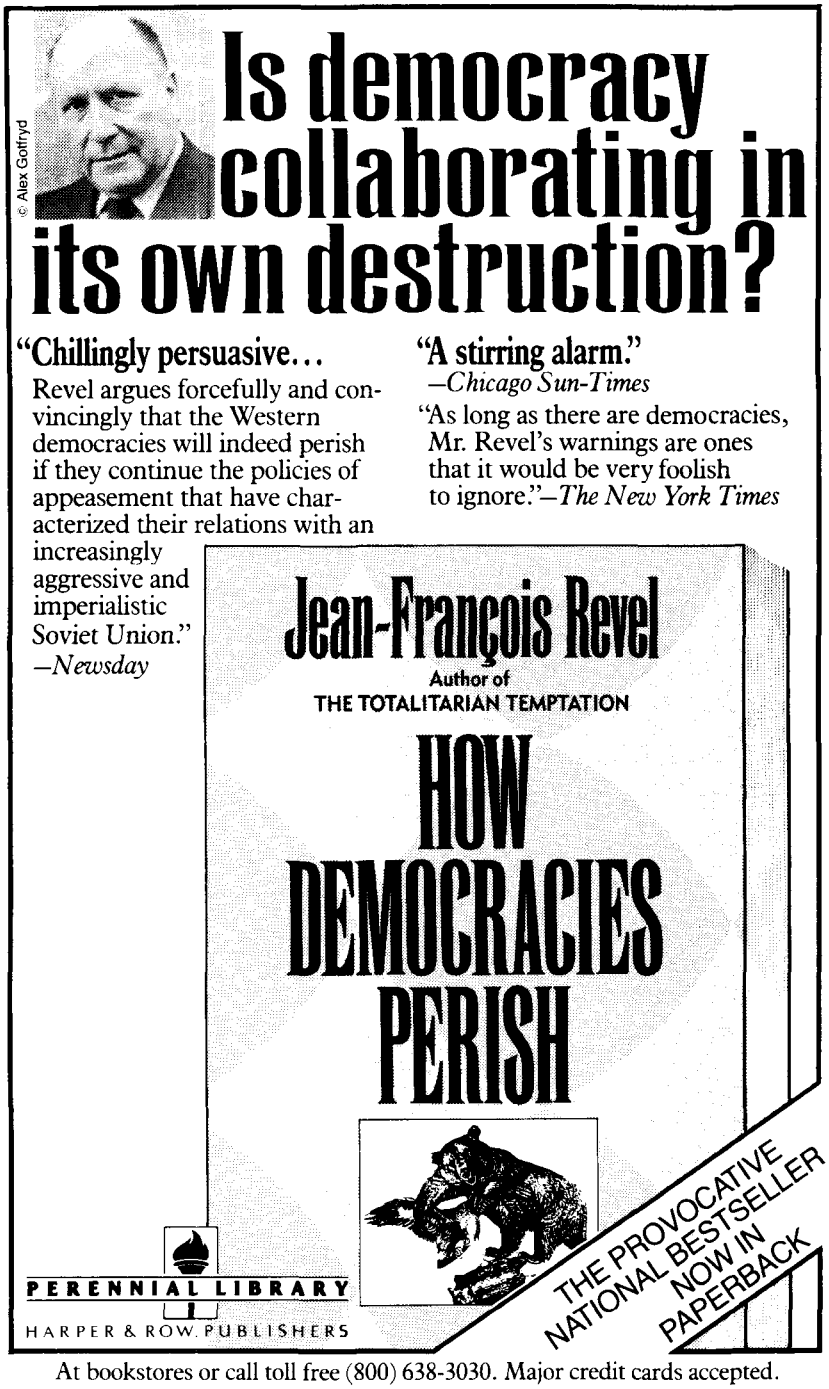
individual poems were imposed on children by teachers and anthologists, but poems that express an adult's need to imagine in childhood all that is felt to be lacking in adult life. The exemplary text in this regard is John Greenleaf Whittier's "The Barefoot Boy," an effusion about the untinctured joys of evanescent childhood that, I can attest, was still regularly inflicted on American schoolchildren as recently as the 1940's.

THE redeeming compensation for this 19th-century tendency to sculpt childhood in sugar candy is the emergence of whimsy and (a little later) wordplay as central qualities of poetry read by children. I say "read by" rather than "written for" because there is a fruitful ambiguity between what was intended for children and what was appropriated by them. Donald Hall makes the shrewd observation in his introduction that there is a current of childishness in 19th-century American literary culture, the very idea of being a poet often popularly associated with being childlike. The prime instance would be the figure who is arguably the greatest American poet of the past century, Emily Dickinson. She did not consciously write for children, but her peculiar combination of lucid, simple diction and wry, surprising perception has been able to speak beautifully to children as well as to adults. Donald Hall includes several of her poems that everybody remembers from childhood ("I like to see it lap the miles," "I'm nobody, who are you?" and so forth) but the following piece, which is somewhat less familiar, illustrates equally well the uses of whimsy:

To make a prairie it takes a clover
and one bee—
One clover, and a bee,
And revery.
The revery alone will do
If bees are few.

This is what literary scholars these days would call a self-reflexive text. The playfulness has a quiet resonance of larger implication because the graceful little pivot of assertion on the repetition of "revery" with the switched rhyme teases us —both grown-ups and children, I should think—into musing over how we do things with poetry, how the imagination, taking materials from the world, makes its own worlds.

THE wordplay poems, some of them American emulations of Lewis Carroll and many of them indigenous creations, provide an analogous kind of delighting exercise of the possibilities of the imagination. If language itself is a conventional system made up of arbitrary components and rules, then poetry, with its metrical patterns and phonetic couplings, is linguistic convention raised to the second power; and poetry based on wordplay acts out our freedom as language-using creatures to juggle and transform the elements of con-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vention with which we must live. Here, for example, is a marvelous Chico Marx routine by Laura E. Richards (1850-1943) entitled "Ele-telephony":

Once there was an elephant,
Who tried to use the telephant—
No! No! I mean an elephone
Who tried to use the telephone—
(Dear me! I am not certain quite
That even now I've got it right.)
Howe'er it was, he got his trunk
Entangled in the telephunk;
The more he tried to get it free,
The louder buzzed the telephee—
(I fear I'd better drop the song
Of elehop and telephong.)

The Hall anthology happily illustrates the persistence of this gift for evocative playfulness in more recent poets like Ogden Nash, Richard Wilbur, and Gelett Burgess (author of minor masterpieces like "The Purple Cow" and "I Wish that My Room Had a Floor"). I must add, however, that when whimsy and wordplay become conventions of children's poetry, some poets will inevitably grind them out with mechanical dreariness like John Ciardi, X.J. Kennedy, and the egregious Dr. Seuss. (I include Dr. Seuss in defiance of the literary judgment of my children, who, like countless other young readers and listeners, have passed through an addiction to his jingling nonsense narratives.)

Wickedness, meanwhile, which was pushed out of children's verse sometime around the middle of the 19th century, now not infrequently sneaks in again through the back door via the poet's imaginative participation in the hostile or guilty impulses of the child. The most striking contemporary instance is Shel Silverstein. I will only mention his Clarence, who gets rid of his pesky old parents in a garage sale and buys a brand-new pair by mail order; his Jimmy Jet, who from long hours of TV viewing turns into a television set and is plugged into the wall; and his Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout, who because she refuses to take the garbage out, produces an apocalypse of refuse (catalogued in noisome detail) that spreads from coast to coast. Though there is whimsy abounding in such verse, it does not seem much of a moral improvement on the punitive harshness of the early Puritans.

THERE is, I would suggest, a fine and wavering line between a poet's ability to capture the spontaneity and boldness of a child's imagination and a poet's entering into the rawness and violence that are closer to the surface in a child's consciousness than in an adult's. One hardly wants a poetry for children from which the feelings of wickedness—fear, guilt, aggression, anger—are excluded, but they should ideally become focused, clarified, sublimated, in the alembic of poetic language. A classic case in point is the concluding stanza of "A narrow fellow in the grass," Emily Dickinson's brilliant poem about the

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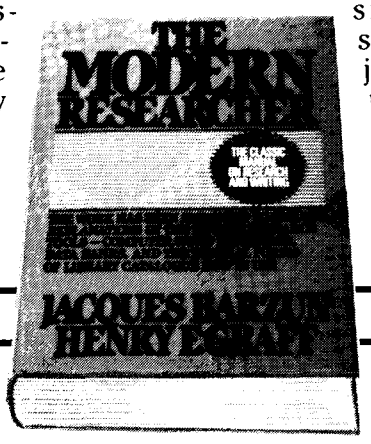

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snake. The diction, as usual, is homespun, but it manages to convey, especially through the celebrated image of the final line, a sense at once immediate and coolly controlled of the immemorial terror evoked by the reptile:

But never met this fellow,
Attended or alone,
Without a tighter breathing,
And zero at the bone.

Scourge of the Left

SPARKS FLY: A TRADE UNION LIFE. By FRANK CHAPPLE. *Michael Joseph. 239 pp. £10.95.*

Reviewed by
HENRIK BERING-JENSEN

IN BRITAIN, the costs of the year-long coal-miners' strike are still being sorted out. Contrary to some sentimentalized American reports, the strike was not solely a matter of pit closures and the future of the coal industry. It was a battle of wills between Mrs. Thatcher and union leader Arthur Scargill as to who governs Britain, the elected government or the assortment of thugs and professional revolutionaries who made up Scargill's flying pickets. Soviet contacts and a Libyan connection figured prominently in Scargill's class-war bid to topple the government. At the same time, the strike underscored the manipulability of the British labor movement.

A rare insight into postwar British labor relations and the radicalization of the Labor party can be found in Frank Chapple's book. Chapple, who served for almost two decades as General Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union and also sat on the national executive committee of the Labor party, is a courageous and outspoken figure, a scourge of the Left as the Left is represented by Arthur Scargill and former Energy Secretary Tony Benn. Chapple's enemies—and they are many—accuse him of seeing Communists everywhere. But something must clearly be wrong with a labor movement that in 1980 hesitated to express support

HENRIK BERING-JENSEN *is a Danish critic now living in the United States.*

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for what it called a "Catholic organization," namely, Solidarity.

It is, indeed, hard to deny Chapple's expertise on the subject of subversion. The son of a cobbler from London's East End, he joined the Communist party as a teen-ager on the eve of World War II and remained a member for nineteen years. He does not pretend that a blinding flash of inspiration transformed him from a committed Communist into an impassioned defender of democracy. Like most serious conversions, this one was based on the slow cumulative effect of personal experience, as when Chapple saw Soviet prisoners of war being returned unwillingly to their own country in 1945 while he was stationed in Lübeck. But it was first and foremost the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 that turned him around. The Communist line was best expressed by then-party boss Harry Pollitt: "If you're worried about it, comrade, take an aspirin." Chapple found himself asking his workmates: "Look at them. The whole British working class, except us, can't be wrong about it. They understand it. Why don't we?"

Having tried in vain to bring about internal reform, Chapple quit the Communist party in disgust. He had come to see his former associates as a "backward, barbarous, and murderous brotherhood." One of his first missions was to help clear them out of the Electrical Trades Union, a fight which ended in a celebrated High Court case in 1961, in which the leadership was convicted of ballot-rigging; according to the counsel for the prosecution, it was the biggest fraud in British trade-union history. Five years later Chapple became the leader of a union which had been turned into a model of democracy.

But the electricians' union has proved the exception in British politics. In vivid detail, Chapple chronicles the long leftward slide of the unions and of the Labor party, a slide that has accelerated over the years as party membership and votes have declined. In his view, the key to understanding what has happened lies in the organizational strength of the militants, their talent for taking over local committees and exploiting the archaic and autocratic structures of the labor movement. Chapple cites a boast by a Communist organizer to the effect that the party could formulate a line in the spring and by autumn it would become the policy of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Labor party. One need only look at recent Labor-party platforms to know what he means: unilateral nuclear disarmament and extensive nationalizations are just some of the things promised for Britain should Labor regain power.

IT HAS traditionally been the argument of the Labor party that it alone was able to handle the militant unions. The record as set forth

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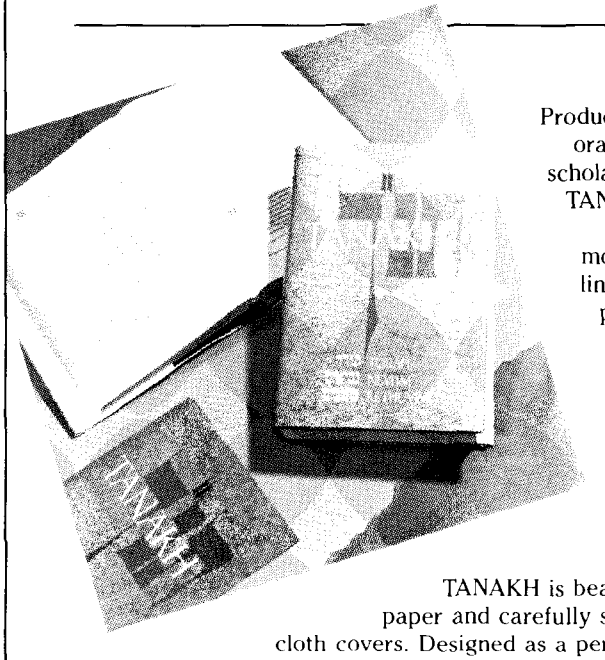

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in Chapple's book speaks otherwise. The fact is that in the 60's and 70's nobody was able to handle the unions. Harold Wilson tried to outwit and outmaneuver rather than fight the leftists, and his first two governments between 1964 and 1970 were characterized by random improvisation and failed attempts at conducting an incomes policy and trade-union reform. Wilson's second stint, after the coal strike had brought down the Conservative Heath government in 1974, was launched with the much-heralded "Social Contract," which soon became riddled with exceptions. By March 1976, Wilson had walked the tightrope long enough and resigned; he was replaced by Foreign Secretary James Callaghan, know as "Sunny Jim." Callaghan engineered an alliance with the Liberals, the so-called Lib-Lab Pact of 1977, but showed himself no more capable than his predecessors of controlling the economy and the unions. Both the TUC and Callaghan's own Labor party rejected his 1978 offer of a 5-percent pay increase.

Britain's industrial chaos climaxed in the famous "winter of discontent" of 1978-79, where every night the television news offered fresh instances of violence. Chapple relates how hospital services were disrupted, the critically ill were left untreated, and the dead denied burial. He does not hesitate to call this kind of industrial action by its proper name, which is terrorism. Meanwhile, Callaghan, though publicly denouncing the strikers as vandals, privately prepared himself to give in to their demands.

The most embarrassing moment of Chapple's career came when the TUC General Council was called to 10 Downing Street to help refashion the Labor election package. Callaghan needed a front of unity and was willing to promise anything if the unions would help return him to power. His last words to the union leaders were extraordinary: "We are prostrate before you—but don't ask us to put it in writing." Chapple found Callaghan's submission degrading and sickening.

Labor's 1979 defeat was inevit-

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able, but the party refused to learn from it. The hard Left, led by Tony Benn, claimed that Callaghan had lost because British voters wanted a *more* left-wing government (an odd assertion, Chapple drily remarks, considering they had just voted into office the most conservative government since the war). Instead of moderating its positions, the party pressed on in its suicidal course. A 1981 special-conference debate over the rules for the election of the party leader turned into a brawl that caused a number of moderates to leave soon after and set up their own new Social Democratic party.

How far Labor had moved leftward had been revealed by the 1980 contest to choose Callaghan's successor. Chapple and his union had favored the moderate Denis Healey; instead, Michael Foot was chosen as a compromise between Healey and the hard Left. Yet compromise was hardly the word one would have associated with Foot, an old-fashioned Oxford radical. He proved erratic and divisive from the very beginning. Predictably, the June 1983 election returned Mrs. Thatcher to office with a whopping majority. Labor received its lowest average vote per candidate since 1900.

Since then the Left has only tightened its grip on Labor; according to Chapple, the same old policies still lurk beneath the more moderate image projected by Neil Kinnock, the new party leader. Kinnock badly failed his first major test by remaining silent too long on the miners' strike and the picket violence. By equivocating, he managed the rare feat both of infuriating the Left and of associating himself with the strike in the eyes of the voters, altogether a perfect demonstration of political impotence.

As FOR the future, the figures speak for themselves: only 39 percent of trade-union members voted Labor in 1983. Thus, if British unions are ever going to represent their politically diverse membership, Chapple argues, they will not only have to forswear the kind of militancy that does nothing for living standards, but they will also have to rethink

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their relationship with Labor. And dialogue with the government is a must; the unions cannot go on speaking as if they were an alternative government, especially one out to wreck the only type of society that allows free unions in the first place.

In addition, Chapple writes, if Britain is not to be left behind in the new industrial revolution, the unions will have to move with the times, embracing new technologies and recognizing the need to phase out obsolete and unproductive industries. (The steel industry offers a particularly frightening example of the futile spending of taxpayers' money.) Chapple has only contempt for the no-growth lobbyists, "nuclear nutters," and others such who, if they succeeded in realizing their aims, would turn Britain into an industrial museum, impoverished and defenseless. The fear of modernization has been the chief factor in earning the unions their image as bastions of regression, backwardness, and superstition. If these attitudes persist, Chapple notes, "the unions will be electoral dinosaurs limping toward extinction."

Post-Valedictory

NEW AND SELECTED POEMS 1923-1985. By ROBERT PENN WARREN. *Random House. 322 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by JAMES GARDNER

Rumor Verified, the volume of Robert Penn Warren's poetry that preceded the present one, constituted a human document of no small interest. For it presented us with the phenomenon of a man who was older than most of us, considering with remarkable poise and dignity the extremity of undoing that might overtake him at any moment. These poems were nothing like Keats's "When I have fears that I may cease to be," in which a young man waxes poetical in the unspoken confidence that he will live forever, nor like those poems of earlier times in which a poet could take comfort in the promise of immortality. Here rather was a man recording precisely what it felt like to stand on the brink of the abyss with full powers of consciousness unimpaired. To his defiance in the face of the absolute there was joined a sense of virile horror, and even in his moments of melodious resignation there was a suggestion of secretively feverish curiosity. And there was something of a touching and unmistakable valediction in this image of the belaureled bard taking his stately leave of us.

But of course Warren was not gathered up like the aged Oedipus amid the violence of forked lightning, but remains, one is happy to report, very much of this world, where he has just celebrated his eightieth birthday. To judge by this latest collection of poems, the failure of the expected *coup de théâtre* to materialize actually seems slightly to have chagrined Warren, for since his calling is to write poetry, he cannot remain silent, and though death remains very much on his mind he is too self-conscious to be caught repeating himself.

THUS it is with a bit of a sense of anticlimax that he now returns to the sort of poetry that he has always written, a poetry very much of the here-and-now, though not without the occasional flight into transcendence. In this, the fourth version of his selected poems, where yet again he has honed down and added to the package he wishes to commit to eternity, Warren invites us to consider the vicissitudes of a career that has spanned over sixty years. The most remarkable discovery this exercise reveals is that, once allowances are made for a few purely formal modifications over the years, the tone of his poetry has remained strikingly constant.

There has always been something decidedly bearish in Warren's habitual poetic voice; indeed, in a review of this volume in the New York *Times Book Review*, William Pritchard remarked, surely correctly, that there seem to be more actual and imaginary bears in these poems than in the work of any other American poet. This bearishness takes the verbal form of a di-

JAMES GARDNER *has written for* COMMENTARY, Art News, *and the* New Criterion.

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rect and almost brutal forcefulness. The reader at once recognizes here a quintessentially modern attitude, one seeking veracity at all costs and making bold to tear away the superficial veneer of civilization (which, curiously enough, is one of the things that contemporary civilization most enjoys having done to it) in order to reveal the turbid undercurrents supposedly seething beneath the surface.

Then there are the mountainous crags and furiously violent storms that occur with equal frequency in Warren's poetry through the years, and which record themselves in the very syllables of his distinctively tempestuous and mountainous poetic persona. Though Warren is at times quite capable of mellifluous and flowery turns of phrase, he chooses most often to strain and torture his language through emphatic spondees that defy fluent utterance: "What years did the crowbar of ice take/ To pry from the crag-face/ That mass?" In virtually every poem in this collection one finds almost as much strife, opposition, and violence as in the storm scene in *King Lear*, the expulsion from heaven of Milton's Satan, and books seven through twelve of the *Aeneid* combined. Warren presents no convincing reason why this should be, undoubtedly because he knows that the vast majority of his readers, being, like himself, so thoroughly of their age, will tamely accept this as the ultimate reality of the world in which they live.

But there is also an element of sweetness and even of mannered elegance that grows out of Warren's habitually volcanic violence, like the flowers that eventually germinate on smoldering lava. In this we may perhaps identify a trace of the Southern temperament that is Warren's by birth, and which would seem to ally an exaggerated gentility to backwoods rustication. Though a great many poems in this collection are written without any recognizable form, and without a very compelling logic to the word that begins or ends a line, there is also a pronounced inclination toward formalism, often going as far as carefully rhymed quatrains

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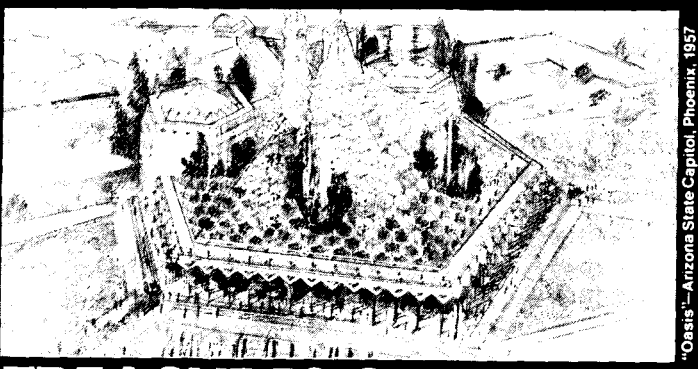

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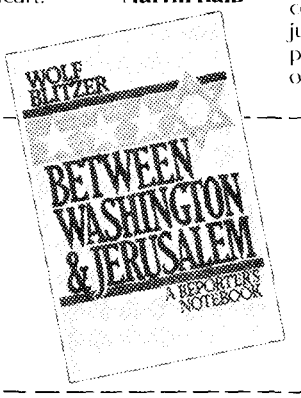

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in iambic pentameter and the use of arcane or archaic-sounding words. In this respect Warren reveals his rootedness in the generation of the Fugitive poets, like John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate, who applied a similarly "literary" style and an impeccable propriety of meter to the romanticizing of their distinctive Southern past.

This quality is most evident in Warren's earlier work, as in "To a Face in the Crowd," which in its untroubled fluency is certainly one of the better poems in this volume:

> Brother, my brother, whither do you pass?
> Unto what hill at dawn, unto what glen,
> Where among rocks the faint lascivious grass
> Fingers in lust the arrogant bones of men?

It is interesting that Warren has done the unusual thing here of inverting the first metrical foot of each of the four lines, perhaps to demonstrate that he is not a slave to iambic pentameter. But aside from this variation, in itself intensely conventional, the lines flow along virtually unimpeded by any inflection, and demonstrate the more dulcet turn that Warren's poetry can take at any moment. Though the influence of Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead" can be heard in the final two lines, Tate is not the only poet Warren is willing to echo; like Tate himself, if a little less frequently, he is not above an occasional nod to the glamorous T.S. Eliot, as in these closing lines from "Another Dimension" which suggest not a little of the ending of "Prufrock":

> I have felt earth breathe beneath my shoulder blades.
> I have strained to hear, sun-high, that Platonic song.
> It may be some men, dying, have heard it.

In the same poem, lip-service is also paid to that modern invention known as unmediated experience, here informed by a little bit of Wallace Stevens, a little of Eliot again, and maybe Heidegger:

> That world which had no meaning but itself,
> As I lying there had only the present, no future or past.

One of the more curious outgrowths of Warren's insistent modernity is a willfully artificial and not always artistically successful use of syntactical inversion. In an age that has seen the almost universal elimination of the limitless syntactical possibilities available to earlier poets, and the replacement of that variety with the generally monotonous standards of conversational English, it is not immediately apparent why Warren should elect, especially in his later poems, to mangle the language to the extent of "Long before sun had toward the mountain dipped," or "Cities beneath sea sank." (Warren also seems to believe that something important is proved by a frequent omission of the definite article.) Perhaps such linguistic mannerisms were suggested to Warren in the work of Dylan Thomas and Gerard Manley Hopkins, but even these poets were not always successful in applying them, and Warren's work would be not one bit the worse without them.

But the principal weakness in Warren's poetry stems from its wildly excessive concatenation of mixed and mismatched metaphors. Even the most sympathetic reader will have trouble knowing what to make of such lines as: ". . . and all they long to hear/ Is the gull's high cry/ Of mercilessly joyful veracity/ To fill the hollow sky." Of course, some meaning can always be found in verse of this kind, at least if the reader is at all practiced in modern poetry, but it does not speak well for any poem when the reader's indulgence is required to help it along. In a discipline in which so much is dependent upon exactitude of expression, even at a metaphorical level, it sometimes seems that Warren's highest ambition is to come only within the general vicinity of the thing in question.

The truth of the matter is that at some point in the early years of this century, the force of internal logic which, like some gravitational pull in the realms of language, attracted all things inexorably toward a common center of meaning, gave way to a much freer form of expression in which meaning could be generated through disconnected spasms of imagery. At times Robert

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Penn Warren comes close to being the *reductio ad absurdum* of this semantic free-for-all; unlike poets of the caliber of Marianne Moore and T.S. Eliot, who managed to subsume a wild profusion of images under a single idea, with each syllable and each image contributing like tesserae in a mosaic, Warren throughout his career has demonstrated neither the inclination nor the power to consolidate his many images and surplus syllables within the framework of a coherent symbolic system.

And yet for all his faults, Warren in his overbearing exuberance is often a far more enjoyable poet than many abler practitioners of the art. He is perhaps the only contemporary poet who can yield pleasure without being truly first-rate. In this regard he might be compared with the Italian Gabriele D'Annunzio, who is often as riotously exuberant as he but who will ultimately prove, as I think Warren will, weak and undisciplined in form as well as in substance. There is, however, surely something to be said for the fervor with which both pursue their artistic principles, especially since in their hands those principles possess an undeniable color and conviction.

A Public & Private Life

CHAIM WEIZMANN: THE MAKING OF A ZIONIST LEADER. By JEHUDA REINHARZ. *Oxford University Press. 576 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by
THEODORE S. HAMEROW

THE promise implicit in the subtitle of this solid first volume on the life and times of Chaim Weizmann is largely though not entirely fulfilled. What we have here is a detailed and scholarly account of the process by which a gifted and ambitious young man from Pinsk became a successful British scientist and leader of the Zionist movement. Indeed, the biography is valuable above all as the story of the trials and struggles of Zionism in its early years. We can almost feel what it must have been like to live in a time when European Jewry was beginning to grope for a new collective identity, for new values, loyalties, ideals, and beliefs. We can grasp the underlying differences dividing the pioneers of Jewish nationalism, moderates from militants, Eastern European Jews from Central European Jews, those who insisted that the Jewish state must be in Palestine from those who were prepared to consider an East African homeland, the secularists from the Orthodox, and the snobs from the lowbrows.

Those interested in tracing the intellectual and ideological roots of the state of Israel will find this part of the book especially illuminating. For it tells how a political concept which had seemed so impractical, so visionary at the time of its inception, gradually began to attract sympathy among Jews and even some Gentiles, so that by 1914 it had become, though still small, an increasingly influential movement. Yet the eventual triumph of Zionism should not obscure the fact that at the turn of the century it was only one, and not the most important, of the many ideologies and organizations by which Jews sought to determine their future in an alien, hostile environment. Those who rejected the teachings of religious Orthodoxy, who defined their ethnic identity in secular rather than theological terms, turned to liberal, socialist, or assimilationist ideas more often than to the doctrines of Zionism. They hoped to throw off the burden of the Diaspora not by abandoning European society but by reforming it.

In 1903 Weizmann confided to Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, that "the larger part of the contemporary younger generation [in Eastern Europe] is anti-Zionist, not from a desire to assimilate, as in Western Europe, but through revolutionary conviction." Most of those being victimized by the czarist regime for support of the social-democratic movement, he

THEODORE S. HAMEROW *is professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He previously contributed "Cravat Jews and Caftan Jews" (May 1984) and "The Hidden Holocaust" (March 1985).*

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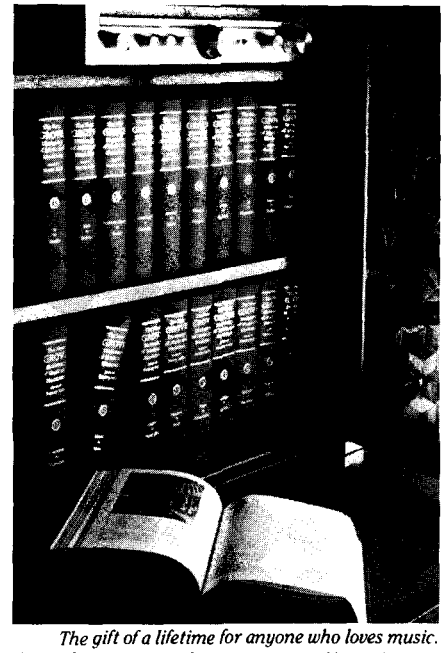

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went on, were Jews; almost all Jewish students belonged to "the revolutionary camp." But

> saddest and most lamentable is the fact that although this [socialist] movement consumes much Jewish energy and heroism, and is located within the Jewish fold, the attitude it evidences toward Jewish nationalism is one of antipathy, swelling at times to fanatical hatred. Children are in open revolt against their parents. The elders are confined within tradition and Orthodox inflexibility, the young make their first step a search for freedom from everything Jewish.

The destruction of European Jewry during World War II, and the subsequent establishment of a Jewish state in the Middle East, have eroded our memory of the bitter struggle which Zionism had to wage against its ideological competitors in the quest for Jewish allegiance.

JEHUDA REINHARZ describes in rich detail how the Zionist movement was able to survive those early battles, and how the youthful Weizmann contributed to its growing success. What is lacking in these pages is the sense of ferment and excitement which gripped the Jews of Eastern Europe, especially the younger generation, almost a century ago. An isolated, persecuted community, which had lived in fear and submissiveness for more than seven hundred years, suddenly began to rebel against the injustice of Gentile bigotry as well as the repressiveness of Jewish Orthodoxy. It was the most far-reaching intellectual revolt in the history of East European Jewry. It marked the beginning of a struggle for political and social emancipation, a struggle out of which the Zionist movement emerged. But there was more to it than that. There was also an insatiable hunger for modernization and secularization in all aspects of cultural life, in education, literature, historiography, and the theater. And with it came the adoption of more elegant dress and manner, the pursuit of more rewarding opportunities and careers, and sometimes a disdain for the caftan and the skullcap.

Weizmann himself exemplified this rebellion against tradition. From the *heder* in the small town of Motol where he was taught his prayers, he moved on to the *Gymnasium* in Pinsk, then to doctoral studies in Germany and Switzerland, then to a teaching appointment in Geneva, and finally to a prominent position in the chemistry department of the University of Manchester. But intellectual secularization and upward mobility were not the only aspects of the Jewish cultural rebellion of a hundred years ago. There was also a liberation of the senses, of feelings, yearnings, and instincts which religious teaching had repressed as sinful. Today's "sexual revolution" in American society seems almost tame in comparison with the rejection of conventional morality by Weizmann's generation. Young men and women, leaving the parental home with its ancient pieties and prohibitions, practiced "free love" and exulted in their emotional emancipation with a defiance which scandalized their elders. The open acceptance of the libido was an essential part of that rebellion of the spirit which swept over East European Jewry.

Here too Weizmann reflected his time and milieu. It is hard to think of the austere first president of Israel as an ardent lover susceptible to the weaknesses of the flesh. Yet we see him here, still a young man in his twenties, "engaged" for four years to Sophia Getzova, a euphemism for living with her, and then abandoning her for the younger and prettier Vera Khatzman, who after another "engagement" of five years became his wife. His letters to Vera reveal an unexpected passion in the Zionist intellectual, a fierce sensuality:

> We shall soon see each other. . . . If only the hour would come more quickly when I shall see you, embrace you. Am I going to cover you with my kisses? Well, I am afraid nothing will be left of you, absolutely nothing, my child. I'll smother you, pinch you, bite you. But God, beware, my darling, for I am a savage!

The reader, as if caught in the act of peeping, feels almost embarrassed by the glimpse of such intense intimacy.

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Yet Vera Khatzman was by no means the last of Weizmann's loves. He remained addicted to sudden infatuations and amorous adventures well into middle age. There is something slightly comical yet touching about the letter of admonition which she wrote him barely a year after they had become lovers, as he was leaving on one of his numerous trips to some Zionist conference: "But, Chaimchik, don't let your weak character get the better of you, don't linger anywhere. Always remember that your Verochka is waiting impatiently for you." Alas, the pleas and exhortations were often in vain. Weizmann continued to stray even after their marriage, she reproaching him for his infidelity, he swearing to her that she was the only woman he really loved. On the eve of World War I, as he approached his forties, he was still trying to assure her that

> if, as you say, I become "infatuated," this doesn't affect that love for you which is the center of my whole consciousness and existence. And the infatuations have passed. I have suffered and got over last year's incident and forgotten it, and I hope that you no longer think about it either. Please don't blame me, Verusya!

It is in dealing with the private aspect of Weizmann's life that Jehuda Reinharz is most successful. If he scants the social and intellectual milieu out of which the Zionist leader emerged, he is superb in depicting the man, with all his strengths and weaknesses, with all his contradictions, ambiguities, paradoxes, and quirks. For the first time we have a portrait of Weizmann which is human rather than heroic; we can now see his frailty as well as his greatness.

The same idealist who devoted his life to the advancement of the Zionist cause was hungry for money and prestige, and the means he employed to attain them were not always irreproachable. He yearned for the limelight, for praise and applause, for the admiration of the multitude. He was not above exaggerating or even misrepresenting his role in the struggle for Jewish emancipation. Describing the part he had played at the time of the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, he sometimes recounted how, as soon as he heard the terrible news, he rushed to the Jewish Pale to organize self-defense groups against renewed anti-Semitic attacks. At other times he maintained that he had actually been in Kishinev during the massacre: "In a group of about 100 Jews we defended the Jewish quarter with revolvers in our hands, defended women and girls, Jewish lives and property. We 'slept' in the cemetery—the only 'safe' place, and we saw 80 Jewish corpses brought in, mutilated dead." None of this is remotely related to the truth. Weizmann was in Warsaw when the pogrom took place, and the news does not appear to have delayed his trip back home to Switzerland by way of Berlin and Mannheim. Throughout his life what he wanted reality to be could sometimes prevail over what he must have known it to be.

Even in his attitude toward the Jews, whose liberation became the overriding purpose of his life, there were curious inconsistencies and contradictions. He deeply resented the snobbery and condescension which the Jewish community of Western and Central Europe frequently displayed toward its co-religionists in the Russian Pale of Settlement. He denounced the "arrogant attitude of West European financial wizards toward their poor brethren with the lack of culture of the Pale," declaring defiantly that "we shall finally succeed in letting the world know where hegemony in Jewry rightfully belongs—in the hands of the [Central European Jew Max Nordau] or in those of the young, spiritually free Eastern Jews." Here he seemed wholeheartedly committed to the ideals and values of the Jewish Pale.

Yet there were also times when he expressed sentiments not much different from those of many German or English Jews. In Pinsk, where he had grown up, "everything . . . is alien to me, terribly alien. . . . Another two or three years abroad, and I'll be *sans patrie* in the full meaning of the word."

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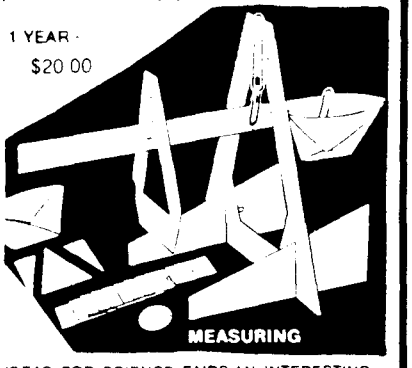

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Jewish life in Warsaw seemed to him repellent, a "*Totentanz, danse macabre*. Ostentatious overdressing, overflowing cafés, gaiety and amusement, while the screw turns tighter and tighter, the circle of misfortunes gets narrower." After arriving in Manchester, he began to sign his name "Charles" Weizmann. And in describing how he met his future wife, he wrote with pride that she belonged to a small group of Russified Jewish students who "were far more attractive than their contemporaries from the Pale of Settlement." They "stood out in contrast from the majority of the Russian-Jewish students in Geneva, who for the most part seemed underfed, stunted, nervous, and sometimes bitter—an easy prey to revolutionary propagandists." All of this sounds almost indistinguishable from the views of the most assimilated and patronizing of Western Jews.

How could a man of such obvious frailty possess such remarkable strength? Jehuda Reinharz does not really answer that question. He is less interested in analyzing than in recounting. He tells us—in clear, sober prose, with illuminating detail and balanced judgment—what happened, when, where, and how. If he fails to solve for us the riddle of Weizmann's life, at least we know now that there is a riddle, and each of us can try to solve it for himself on the basis of solid, factual knowledge. Someday we may get a biography which is more successful in reconciling the contradictions between the man and the statesman, between his thoughts and deeds, his theories and practices, his purposes and methods. But we are not likely to get it for a long time to come. Until then this book will remain the most learned, judicious, and detailed account of the making of a Zionist leader.

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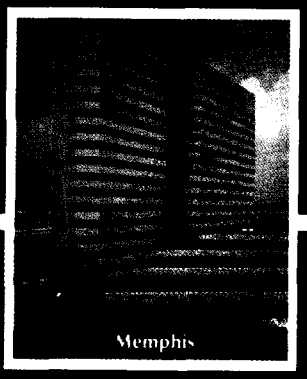
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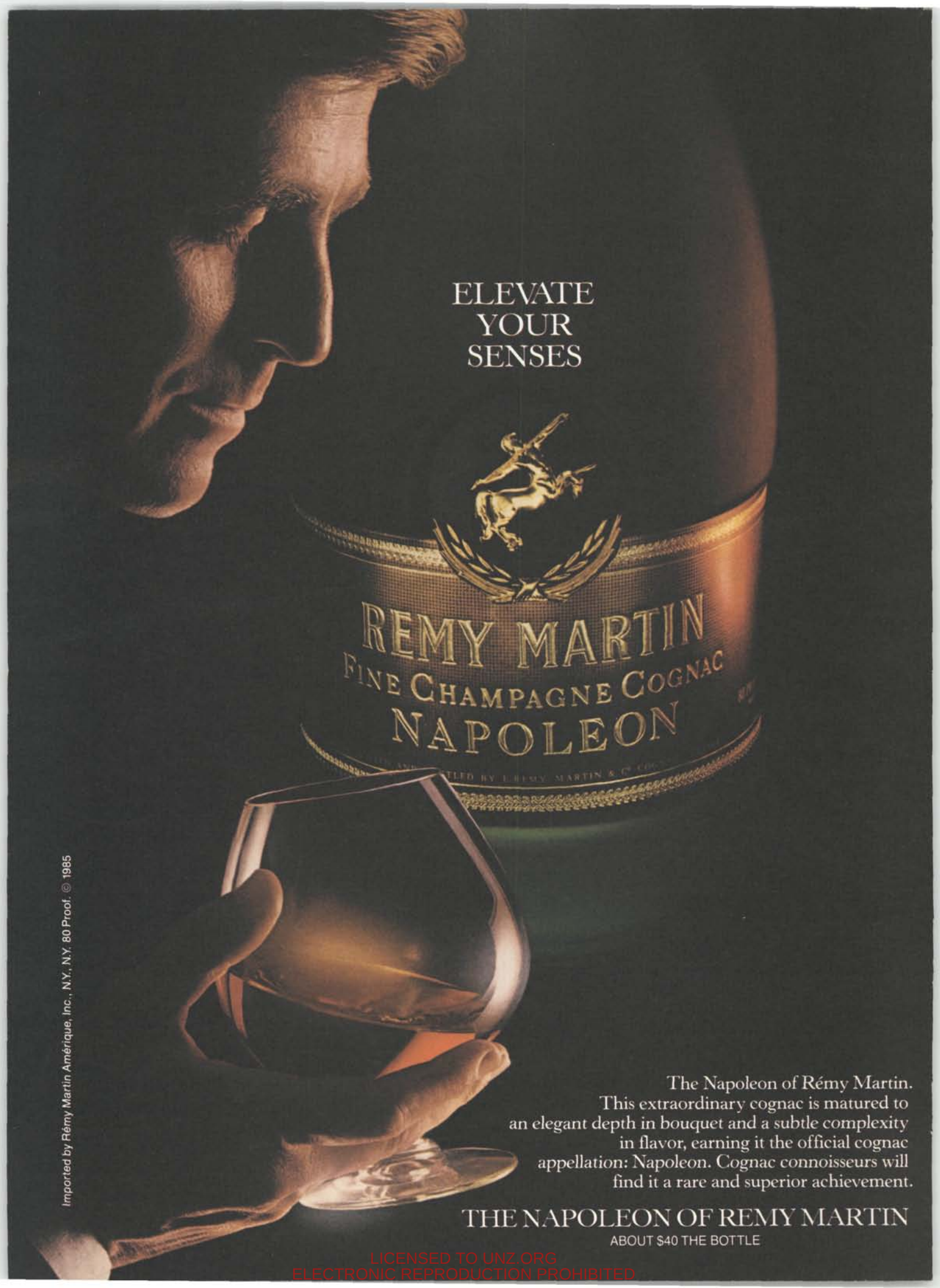
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